



THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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contents

HAROLD BEAVER	T. Walter Herbert Jr: Marquess Encounters — Melville and the Meaning of Civilization 451-2
DORIS LANGLEY MOORE	Leslie A. Marchand (Editor): "For Freedom's Battle" — Byroe's Letters and Journals Volume 11, Paul Graham Trueblood (Editor): Byroe's Political and Cultural Influence in Nineteenth-Century Europe — A symposium 453-4
PATRICK MCCARTHY	Pol Veedromme: Robert Le Vigan — Compagnon et personnage de L.-F. Céline 453-4
TOM PAULIN	Walter Allen: The Short Story in English 455
FLEUR ADCOCK MARK ABLEY CHRISTOPHER REID	Charles Brash: Indirectness — A Memoir 1909-1947 John Coulter: In My Day — Memoirs Fête Champêtre (poem) 456
JOHN SIMON PETER KEMP C.H. Sisson	Vladimir Nabokov: Lectures on Literature Ellen Cronin Rose: The Novels of Margaret Drabble — Equivocal Figures A.D. Nuttall: Overheard by God — Fiction and Prayer in Herbert, Milton, Dante and St. John 457-8
PATRICIA CRAIG LINDSAY DUODUI HOLLY ELEY	Fiction Sueiti Namjoshi: Feminist Fables Mary Hobson: Oh Lily Barbara Rogan: Changing States 459
ALAN BELL PATRICIA CRAIG DERRICK PUFFETT STEPHEN FENDER STANLEY WELLS RICHARD BROWN DAVID EWART	Commentary "Oh please Mr Tiger!" (National Library of Scotland) Glasshouses (BBC TV and Radio) Khevanahine (BBC TV and Radio) The Crucible (Comedy Theatre and BBC TV) Timon of Athens (BBC TV) Charlots of Fire (Odeon Cinema, Haymarket) O Young Freshie Folks, Hee or Shee (poem) 460-4
DAVID PEARLS DAVID LIBBRMAN	To the Editor Among this week's contributors 461
IAN R. CHRISTIE	M.R. Heighr: A Study of Self-Deception James Tulley: A Discourse on Property — John Locke and his Adversaries 463
RICHARD TUCK ANTONY BRETT-JAMES	Marlo Peters: Pitt and Popularity — The Patriot Minister and London opinion during the Seven Years' War Corine Comstock Weston and Joanne Redrow Greenberg: Subjects and Sovereigns Georges Duby: The Three Orders — Fendal Society Imagined W.F.K. Thompson (Editor): An Enigma in the Peninsular War 464
HERBERT SOUTHWORTH GERRY ASHTON	La Gaceta Literaria Gwynne Edwards: Lorea — The Theatre Becomes the Shunt 465
DAVID KIRBY JAY PARINI RUTH PAOL CHARLES BOYLE	A.R. Ammons: Selected Longer Poems Louise Glück: Descending Figure Guy Davenport: Archilochos, Sappho, Alkman — Three Lyric Poets of the Greek Bronze Age A Visit to the Big House (poem) 466
DENIS STEVENS WILLIAM MANN MARTIN COOPER	Iain Fennell: Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua Bryan Chyng: The Record Year Igor Markevitch: Etre et avoir été 467
ABRAHAM BRUMBERG JULIUS LEWIN SANDRA SALMANS A.M. RENDEL	Joshua Rubenstein: Soviet Dissidents — Their Struggle for Human Rights John D. Jackson: Justice in South Africa William H. Chofel: Civilities and Civil Rights — Greenboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen: The Great Powers and the European States System, 1815-1914 468
MALCOLM VALE J.M. ROBERTS NORMAN STONE ARNOLD PAUCKER	Joseph R. Strayer: The Reign of Philip the Fair Marino Berengo: Intelligenza e libertà nella Milano della Restaurazione Robert K. Massie: Peter the Great Dorinda L. Newby: The Jews in Weimar Germany 469
NICHOLAS FAITH	René Pélissier: Le Médoc Edmund Pennington-Rossell: The Wines of Bordeaux Cyrus Redding: A History and Description of Modern Wines George Saintsbury: Notes on a Cellar Book Michael Broadbent: The Great Vintage Wine Book Judith and Robert Zappa: Vineyards and Vignerons Duché Robinson: The Wine Book David Peppercock: Brian Cooper, Elwyn Blacker: Drinking Wine Robert Berman: In the Heat of the Sun 470
NESTA ROBERTS	Peter Terrell, Veronika Calderwood-Schmitt, Wendy V.A. Morris and Roland Brytsepecher (Compilers): Collins German-English English-German Dictionary G.H. Balfour: The State Library and its Librarians, 1722-1972 H. Roy Jones: Butterworths — History of a Publishing House Polly Gosselin: Trinity College Library — The First 100 Years 471

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The drama of disorientation

By Harold Beaver

T. WALTER HERBERT, JR.:
Marquess Encounters
Melville and the Meaning of Civilization
237pp. Harvard University Press. £9.
0 674 55066 8Two missionaries arrived at the Marquesas Islands in 1791. They were brought by the same ship, the Duff, that had established the highly successful mission on Tahiti. But while one missionary stayed on to face a long and ultimately frustrating task, the other made off again. Why did Mr Crook stay on? Why did Mr Harris sail? The ship's captain, in *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean* (1799), tried to explain.

Crook felt encouraged from the start; he enjoyed the ceremonial greeting. But Harris was clearly shaken. He at first declined to go ashore, under the pretext that he needed more time for packing; and even after six days on land returned aboard full of misgivings. Still, he agreed to have another go and again went ashore. Four days later they found him hiding in the hills, having been robbed of his belongings. "In a most pitiable plight, and like one out of his senses". As far as the captain could make out, both men had been invited by the coastal chief to make a journey inland. But Harris had refused. So Crook had gone alone with the chief, who left his wife with Harris "to be tended as if she were his own".

That was meant, the captain realized, as a remarkable gesture of hospitality. But when Harris again refused, the chief's wife "became doubtful of his sex" and to the company of some other women called his but at night where they "tended themselves concerning that point; but not in such a peaceable way but that they broke him". Harris thereupon dashed out of the hut with his trunk and went down to the beach, where he was further scared by a band of males; so he rushed off into the hills, leaving them to plunder his goods.

The captain's judgment was stern: "Discovering so many strangers, he was greatly terrified; and, perceiving what they had been doing, was determined to have a place where the people were so disposed and given up to wickedness; a case which should have excited a contrary resolution." But from the start, Harris had felt inadequate, disoriented,

undermired. When he awoke to find the women examining his body, T. Walter Herbert, Jr. argues, all this repressive psycho-sexual mechanism collapsed. He was flooded with impulses and emotions that he could not control. The event was literally unspeakable. It lay on the very edge of insanity. It could only be expressed in the vehement condemnation of the Marquesas as "savage".

In fact, it seems most unlikely that the women were "doubtful" of Harris's sex. Marquesses were simply more fascinated than we are with male genital characteristics. Melville, in *Typee*, suggests that he and his companions were subjected to a similar investigation. But for the missionary Harris, the ultimate dread, the annihilating Boojum. The language of faith alone could not sustain him; nor could that of "civility". The concept of "civilization" as corroborating power did not yet exist: Dr Johnson had refused to admit the word to his dictionary.Such is the theme of *Marquess Encounters*. It is a peculiarly American theme, since to play the loner on a racial boundary was to adopt a peculiarly American stance. The original role of the frontier — whether in New England, or Jefferson's Virginia, or Cooper's New York — was to sustain a Janus face. For if from one point of view Indian savagery seemed degrading, by reversing the perspective the frontiersman could catch a view of civilization which was just as demeaning. Racial boundaries were defined by one ideology of exclusion: "Whether the savage domain is seen as a mess to be straightened out, or as a frustrating mystery to plunge into, it remains a place of the mind". It was a place for testing communal values and confirming or repudiating such values. Far more than a geographical zone, it structured American identity.

The Marquesas Islands, in this sense, typify the American frontier. Though claimed for the United States, the annexation was never ratified. They remained an ideal frontier; and Professor Herbert organizes his study around three major encounters separated by some fifteen years. First a naval commander, Commodore David Porter sailed into the Pacific during the war of 1812 to destroy the British whaling fleet in Polynesia, taking possession of the Marquesas in 1813. Next the missionaries: the Rev Charles Stewart arrived in 1829 as chaplain.

aboard the USS Vincennes and his enthusiastic account prompted a mission, led by William Alexander, to land in 1833. Last a romantic refugee: in 1842 Herman Melville deserted the whaler *Acusmet*, taking refuge in the interior. Each brought to this insular outpost his own model, or paradigm, or interpretative scheme, however inarticulate, of civilization. These systems might (ie shorthand) be classed as the Enlightenment, Calvinism and Romanticism. But it is precisely Professor Herbert's argument that neither Porter's *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* (1815), nor Stewart's *A Visit to the South Seas* (1831), nor Melville's *Typee* (1846) exemplifies any such system. Rather, each records a moment of intense disorientation, and the peculiar rhetoric and dramatic structure, the adaptations and evasions and selective suppressions of each account reveal the writer's instinctive sense of identity. At the moment of crisis it is not social forms merely but identity itself that seems threatened and confirmed, far beyond habit or prejudice. For if identity found, really itself gives way, as it did for poor Harris on Nukuneha. In this reading, then, it is the literatures that compel attention: not merely the said, but the unsaid; not the message only, but its code of metaphors.

Herbert imposes a steady structural pressure on his chosen pioneer, while his own book accumulates a kind of comparative grammar around that single Marquesan context. All this is admirable. Nor does it matter that we know next to nothing of that contest from outside those sources: these texts are read by him for what they have to tell us not about the Marquesas, but about themselves. They are explored for their own hidden premises and devout articulation. They are interpreted not so much as messages about others (savages) as for their own persuasive and civilizing coherence. It is as if William Carlos Williams's famous dictum were reversed. Instead of "No ideas but in things", the modern structuralist, in the wake of Saussure, exclaims: "No things but in ideas". It is for the various and conflicting ideologies he examines from his early nineteenth-century texts that Herbert himself wishes to read.

Perhaps that is why he is so painstaking about the matter of his own tactics. He is too conscious of his indecent reversal of old-fashioned American pragmatism. His

test becomes bloated with "eured" presences and "regnant" imagery as soon as he contemplates his own procedures. Metastasis, as he calls it, rather goes to his head. But in the patient unriddling of his texts he excels; and that is the heart of his book.

But there is another kind of reversal that he imposes. Commodore Porter's account, which is chronologically prior to that of the missionaries, is postponed to second place. That is, Herbert switches his texts to maintain the orderly progress of school histories: after the religious ferment, the enlightenment; after a puritan seventeenth century, a rational eighteenth century and a romantic nineteenth century. But this disguises the very impetus of the colonial experience. The movement was not from helpless dependence on divine mystery to rational self-possession, but the exact reverse. After the Cooks and Bougainvilles and Porters came the missionaries. This only serves to emphasize the official, structured nature of Herbert's enterprise. It is a juxtaposition of discourses on which he is engaged, not a colonial history.

The mission that landed in 1833 was an offshoot of the successful American mission to Hawaii. It consisted of three couples (the Alexanders, the Armstrongs and the Parkers) with their four children. They quickly built a compound on residential plots, with internal partitions for individual privacy and separate areas for each family. Nothing could have been more calculated to shock Marquesan sensibilities, nor to bludge the missionaries' view of their new environment. For a start, they could not grasp a social structure without a visible hierarchy of rank or seniority. They profoundly disapproved of Marquesan sexual exposure and open licentiousness. They were contemptuous of the non-stop clan warfare and Mafia-like feuds. They were horrified by the ritual use of corpses, that ultimate humiliation of enemies by triumphant absorption.

To the Marquesas, however, such cannibalism was heroic, since it made the whole tribe a repository of its best qualities. Much of their culture, even by Homeric standards, was heroic, with its suspension of fighting during festivals, its prolonged ritual exchanges of taunts but minimal inflictions of injuries. An early eyewitness recounts a three-day battle in which a total of four men were killed.

The last day of the battle, he reports, is more for mirth than war, every one making the best appearance he can. Their Allies meet them on the move, making a grand appearance of about 4000, every party bringing their drums and conch shells. A very grand dance ensues: some are fighting, others dancing. At times those that were fighting would set down and talk with each other with as much composure as though they were friends and then rise again and renew the fight.

Between Americans and Marquesans, as the Tapis were to discover, there was a confusion of metaphors. To the Americans war meant power: politics, in the classic phrase, carried out by other means. To the Marquesans war was more like a dance in which "participation" (as Liam Hudson recently argued in the TLS) were seen as performers and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. Their battles, in fact, enacted rather than settled differences. They were a form of communication, as were the heated exchanges between the missionaries and their prospective converts on the subject of food. The Americans claimed that their defiled fowls were more food; the coconuts replied that if the missionaries ate the fowls, which were their gods, they "also will eat Jehovah". From which Alexander warily foresaw the possibility of martyrdom.

But it was not their hosts, the Tapis, who were really threatening; it was the Tapis (or Tapis) who saw the missionaries as allies of their rivals. This was most disconcerting. It was one thing to be martyred; quite another to be killed as friends of the cannibalistic Tapis. The mission was thwarted. God, they knew, had a plan for the human race. It was a benevolent plan revealed, step by step, as the prophets of light came into conflict with the kings of darkness. They might be worried in a skirmish, but the war had to be won. It was bound to be won, for it was a war of liberation whose ultimate victory was as predetermined as any Marxist revolution. A war of liberation not from the chains of economic slavery, but from the bondage to sin, with plenty of Calvinist torment and inner wrestling along the way.

It slowly dawned on them that there would be no repeat performance of Hiram Bingham's miraculous conversion of the Hawaiians; that Stewart's vision of

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the Marquesans as *animae naturaliter Christianae*, lastingly drawn to civilizing plienics, was a fiction; that Dr Johnson's "happy valley" was not to be found in Nukuhiva; that the Marquesans lacked even the rudimentary language to express concepts of "law" and "government." Yet their astute idolatry remained an obstinate challenge to a crusade. Even as his mission crumbled around him, Alexander mused that abandoning the Marquesans would be "to give infidels occasion to say the Gospel was sent to the work of taming the rude savages." Nukuhiva & Satan will exult when he finds he is left unopposed in his old dominions".

But what did "taming" mean? It was a euphemism for revolutionary destruction; a total abolition of the old religion; a total reconstruction of character; a total renovation of the culture. The missionaries' vocabulary assigned all Marquesan practices to a code of filth and death and darkness. Their role, as they saw it, was to be "made the instrument of raising to the dust such altars of abomination and blood, and of erecting on the ruins humble chapels of adoration and prayer, where the only offering required is the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart". But this revolution, paradoxically, was to be achieved not by arms, but by force of words. The God was the instrument of God. So God's vernacular had been translated into Marquesan; or rather, the Marquesan had first to learn the cannibals' tongue. Alexander wrote, "I thought I was going to have my tongue unloosed". Alexander also wrote, "that I may tell them plainly the glad tidings which angels rejoiced to publish." For history, too, was ultimately on the mission's side. Only it was not called history in those pre-Marxist days so much as "providence"; and providence needs a longer run—plus a warship or two. In the short run the Marquesans noticed that Jehovah's so-called power was a fraud, that "the missionaries did not kill thieves, that they did not use physical force and were also unable to lay hold of the physical weapons that were available to the Marquesan holy men. A Marquesan was competent to lay out on coasts that would soon be destroyed; a thief who could send off with his belongings; but 'his white cows' (as the Marquesans termed the missionaries) were altogether defenseless".

Commodore David Porter, on the other hand, relied not on spiritual reconstruction, but on education. He wanted to *elevate* the Marquaneses. He wanted them, by technical and commercial progress, to stand on a common understanding and cooperation. This was not a matter of *grace* so much as knowledge; not of spiritual revolution so much as practical evolution or development. Unlike the missionaries, he was impressed by the Marquaneses. He was impressed by their many achievements: their architecture, for instance; their weaving and fluting techniques; their much skill and ingenuity. But he was done by our most expert seamen: "with their skill in navigation; their spontaneous cooperation without legal or political restraints." Like Jefferson lauding the Indian, he concludes:

They have been stigmatized by the name of savages; it is a term wrongly applied; they rank high to the scale of human beings, whether we consider them morally or physically. We find them brave, generous, honest, and benevolent, acute, ingenious, intelligent, and their beauty and regular proportions of their bodies, correspond with the perfections of their minds.

High words - which he sood had to circumscribe and tedious. These nature's children also turned out to be lazy-minded, superstitious, gullible, ruddled: "I'm not fond of trouble, and least of all the trouble of thinking. They are very credulous and will as readily believe in one religion as another." I have explained to them the tenets of the Christian religion, to a number, and sell their ideas; they listened with such attention, appearing pleased with the novelty of it, and agreed that our God must be greater than theirs. "Religion for them was merely a toy; their shrines were 'baby-houses'; their gods, 'their dolls'." Their awkwardness, though, he finds he can defend: it is our dress but manners that make women. But cannibals proved more than logic; it was impossible to reconcile that with "generosity" and "benevolence." "I was not sympathetic with their cleanliness and peaceful fastidiousness. 'How then can it be possible,' he asks, 'that a people so deluged living in a country abounding with agriculture and a considerable variety of vegetables, should prefer a loathsome putrid human carcass to the numerous delicacies that their valleys afford?' It cannot be

he concludes, "there must have been some miscommunication." There could be no doubt that the "mis" were: that would be altogether too irrational, too unneutral.

Culturally, then, the Marquesans were immature children, well endowed in body and mind, needing only "set" in perfecting their crude democracy. But events were to put that premise to the test. Commodore Porter had originally landed to refill his ship. Trapped between rival raiding parties, he tried to make peace with both sides, only to be taunted by both sides. Having exchanged names, one Tei chief argued, Porter should share his hatred of the Happons because they had cursed the bones of his mother who was new Porter's mother. The American knew he was entangled in "sophistry," but when a Hapah attack was mounted, launched a counter-attack. Things immediately went wrong. Porter's own standards he indulged in overkill; his men committed five fatalities. This was unprecedented. Suddenly he had been transformed, in Marquesan eyes, from a coward to a "domon of destrudoos."

The American presented himself as a super-tri-bial protector who could back his benevolence by an exemplary code of punishment. But to the Marquesans his power simply exemplified transcendent power. Despite a prolonged drought, Porter was now showered with bananas, coconuts, breadfruit, sugar-cane, but above all, with hogs. In exchange he offered pieces of iron. But the Marquesans were trying to restore the ritual equilibrium by their gift of pigs (which, in his day, constitute the symbolic means of exchange on New Guinea). Furthermore he unilaterally declared him *n haka-iki*, or tribal chief, and built him a tribal village. All this is completely reported: now on the fourth day after the battle, "upwards of four thousand natives, from the different tribes, assembled at the camp with materials for building, and before night they had completed a dwelling-house for myself and another for the officers, a hall for a cooper's shop, and a place for our guns, a bake house, a guard house, and a shed for the centinel to walk round." Taking possession that same evening, Porter remarks that this village had been built "by art by enchantment." He named it "Madison Ville", and after a salute of seventeen guns, took possession of the island. A fort was built at the entrance to the harbour.

What was viewed by the Americans as a rational balance of coequalities was perceived by the Marquisians as deference to savage and unpredictable force. When the Americans eventually abandoned Madilven Village, it was razed to the ground except for a wall built by British prisoners-of-war. With power dispersed, the emblematic attributes of power too were to be eradicated. But first the power had to be further upset. The Marquisians were disturbed by the Americans' Tell alliance and suspected treachery offered of peace. For the Marquisians, the victory over the Hoppaha, but the Telpis defiantly called them cowards and the Americans "white lizards, mere dirt." To the Telpis they had become "the posteriors and the privates of the white men," for the white man offered a "white foreign paradox: an iron hand in a velvet glove." Instead of childlike reason, the Marquisian was confronted by adolescent obstinacy.

So he loved the valley of the Tigris
After an initial repulse, coerced his
trial paradox: a trail of terror; The
tragedy of peace, to his own amazement,
erected a flourishing civilization. The pro-
cess of civilization, as so often since,
began with devastation: "Never in my life
did I witness a more delightful scene, or
perceive more repugnancy than I now
perceive to the especially which compelled me
pursue a happy and heroic people."

Melville in *Typee* added an ironic post-
script, observing that a "long line of
smoking ruins defaced the once smiling
bosom of the valley, and proclaimed to its
human inhabitants the spirit that reigned
the breast of Christian soldiers."

[illegible]

called Wisnui. Wilson was British; he had apparently settled in Nukuneha ten years earlier, was tattooed from top to toe, and spoke Marquesan fluently. It was Wilson who had been the constant intermediary between the Americans and the Marquesans. It was Wilson who acted as double agent, now abetting (it seems) the attack on the Taipis, now undermining the fort, coordinating the Islanders and growing band of deserters in an attack, finally attempting to gun down the last of the abiding fleet.

Civilized conflict too, for Porter, was imbued with ritual that consolidated values and confirmed difference. It was a rite every bit as testing as a skirmish between Hapahps and Tsipia. However various their versions of protestant civilization, both Madisonville and the mission were sustained by a superior power, a secret weapon of incalculable destructive force: the bullet and the Bible. Herbert never quite comes out to acknowledge the invincible self-confidence conferred by these B-bombs. With such an arsenal up one's sleeve, the game of "Who's the better savage fighter" was always worth playing. It was a game of self-identification with minimum loss (pace Harris) of self-confusion and self-implosion.

So a challenge was posed by the deserter, the beachcomber, or *cowaco* (Marquesa for "ramp" or "rover") alone on the savanna/civilized boundary: such as the renegade *Admiral* Wilson; such as Morrisson who acted as interpreter for the Rev Charles Stewart and later advised the Telis to murder Alexander's missionaries for the sake of their belongings; such as Horman Melville who bolted into the hills of Nukuewa as deserter from the *Acushnet* and *Rev-Admiral Dupetit-Thouars* was anchored in Talaboa Bay at the time, manoeuvring the Marquesas for France. The young American needed to escape this now-fangled French jurisdiction and so wandered into the valley of the Talpis. There he found he was useless at men-of-war, but handy enough as an informant on the strength of the French squadron. The American, for his part, was humbly grateful for the chief's protection.

Young Herman must have long dreamed of such an adventure. He was a nephew of Captain John DeVolf II, the close friend of H.H. von Langsdorff, the Russian naturalist who had visited the Marquesas in 1804. He was a cousin of Thomas Melville who had served aboard the USS Vincennes in 1829, accompanying Stewart on his excursion into the Tapa Valley. This was no ordinary South Seas salt or layabout, but a learned and gentle cultivator of the picturesque. So he proved something of a conundrum, this gentlemanly deserter, this aloof and superior young fellow in flight from Christian civilization to benign savagery.

Ramp is the collective of, e. gentlemanly ramp is the noble savage; both victims of ruthless, materialist culture; both alienated, in a commercial age, from their past; both poignant survivors. As a seachamber on this literary frontier, Melville was able to straddle both Tupia and missionaries, both active cannibals and French imperialists. He struck a dynamic pose, as if torn between brother and master (for the savages), hatred and nostalgia (for civilized life), preoccupied by his civilities, his own inner turmoil, fascinated by the clash of strange encounters, ready to borrow, fabricate, lie, for the ultimate truth of fiction.

The blood-like skill we display in the invention of all manner of death-dealing engines; the vindictiveness with which we carry on our wars; and the misery and desolation that follow in their train, are enough of themselves to distinguish the white civilized man as the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth.

For it was discomfiting that intrigued
futility, not cultured closure. His was to be
closure of shifting perspectives and felled
spheres, beginning in pain and depression
and ending on a lame (leg), succeeded by
pathetic resignation (the limp disappears);
moved by delight at this "Happy Valley"
from arbitrary codes and civilized
order. That society, the harbor decided,
was founded on "the grand principle of virtue
and honor" but it flowed over by the



Twinning the two-faced. Jann Howorth's "Janus Mask", which can be seen in an exhibition of the work of "The Ruralists" at the Arnold Gallery, Bristol (see p. 16), multiplies in a mirror the profiles of the Roman god of beginnings. Here Janus, who was also the guardian of gates and doors (the doors of his temple in the Forum Romanum were closed during peace and open during war), looks behind and in front but not at himself in the mirror; Jann Howorth's work is described as "neither painting nor sculpture" and stands, perhaps, on the frontier between the two, looking both ways.

open eyes. But then he is stalled once more, perplexed. What were those taboos and tattoos but closed systems, after all? They both excluded him and, even more frighteningly, offered to enroll him. So he swung round, a cycle from uncertain misgivings to ambivalent horror, with occasional glimpses of a new radicalism. Might not "savagery" itself be a concept generated by Western ideology? Might not "civilization", as the means for transcending Polysemies, merely pave the way for their inevitable degradation? Was not "progress" perhaps a synonym for white imperialism? His was not a practical project (like Portar's), nor a spiritual project (like the missionaries), nor an aesthetic project. *Typee*, that is, does not

Yoc in this too Melville was a missionary, though his mission was to the Melanesians but to his fellow Americans. "The term 'Savage,'" he had written,

I, I conceive, often misapplied, and indeed when I consider the vices, cruelties, and enormities of every kind that spring up in the tainted atmosphere of a feverish civilization, I am inclined to think that so far as the relative wickedness of the parties is concerned, four or five Marquesan Islanders sent to the United States as Missionaries might be quite as useful as an equal number of Americans despatched to the Islands to do a smaller conveyance.

It was in order to become such a missionary, as it were by proxy, that he had volunteered. Though, of course, he was misunderstood. When he caricatured a fat and prissy missionary's wife being drawn to church in a little go-cart by two islanders, the *Christian Parlor Magazine* refused to see the point. "Better to earn a subsistence by industry as porters", it intoned, "than to laugher and flounder each other." Or perhaps it understood all too well, when it charged him with trying to convert Americans to "Typeism".

As Malinowski recorded in *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*: "History is observation of facts in keeping with a certain theory; an application of this theory to the facts as time gives birth to them." History makes rather heavy going of such concepts, but his three inter-related narrative stages, within one generation, on single island make a fascinating laboratory to test the two-hundred-year-old compass between Prospero and Caliban. For the anthropologist, he claims, had most to learn from Melville. That unstable, mobile, literary identity has become Prospero's professional identity.

But what of Cellban? Must be

Must he remain for ever an enigma? May he never reverse Roman Jakobson's model of communication and send a message back? We have no verifiable account of Portor's arrival, nor of the missionaries, of course. No comprehensive name for the Islanders even, other than "the men" (*te iai 'enana*). But there is evidence none the less. As Armstrong recorded:

The behavior of the natives was a severe trial to my feelings, as it commonly is whenever we attempt to preach to them. Some lie & accept our words with a laugh and talk; some quarrel, while the speaker is said; and others mock, and mimic the preacher & endeavor to excite the people in their laughter. He has been a long time in this way twisting a rope, and often there is such confusion that the speaker can scarcely hear himself speak. When we request them to be still and hearken to our words, they reply, "Yes, let us all sit still and hear thee." One says to the other, "Talk away there," and makes a laughing face though he is silent. Another says, "I will throw a stool at him; he ought must retaliate; and that excites laughter. Thus the whole congregation is a scene of noise & confusion. Not infrequently the half of the present will arise and go off, laughing and mocking. This behavior is a small trial to our patience. I have said and done my very best, and yet my

[illegible]

That missionary was none other than Mr. Crook, who persisted alone in

The way to Missolonghi

By Doris Langley Moore

LESLIE A. MARCHAND (Editor)
"For Freedom's Battle": Byron's Letters
and Journals, Volume 11 1823-1824
256pp. John Murray. £11.50.
0 7195 3792 4

PAUL GRAHAM TRUEBLOOD (Editor)
Byron's Political and Cultural Influence in
Nineteenth-Century Europe
A symposium.
210pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 29389 4

It must be exhilarating for Leslie Murray to have completed his long and arduous project of editing, more accurately than has yet been done or attempted, all the known letters of Byron, 2000 of them, many now published for the first time. And it must be very satisfying to John Murray IV to have got them into print in eleven handsome volumes. His great-great-grandfather would have been amazed, not because they revealed hidden aspects of a character John Murray II stood up with remarkable acuteness, but because a day has dawned when there are no problems about indiscretions, no need to exaggerate, no glowing synd of advisers urging "Don't publish!" but only heartfelt invitations to publish and be met.

I too can boast some little reason to congratulate myself, for I am the sole surviving member of the Committee on the 154th, in 1924, in vain to get a resolution passed by Byron into Westminster Abbey. I was twenty-one years old and as my youthful enthusiasm had led Rowland Prothero to nominate me, (I am glad Dr. Marchand has paid tribute to Prothero's pioneering work in editing the *Letters on Journals* brought out between 1898 and 1901 in spite of many difficulties made by the 2nd Earl of Lovelace, who would not let him use of the very letters that he had written) (Lovelace) had received as a gift from the publisher's father. Ours was the third.

attempt to gain recognition for Byron in Poet's Corner, and it was implacably turned down; yet I have lived to see not only a memorial in the Abbey and this fine eleven-fold monument, but a complete change in the assessment both of the poet and the man.

Of course, there were many who appreciated him then, otherwise there would have been no such committee, no such widespread centenary celebrations, nor would it have been worthwhile to keep his works in print throughout all the previous hundred years, or for artists to contrive posthumous portraits and fergem to imitate his handwriting. Byron has acvcr been neglected, merely seen as la a distorting mirror. Open any Victorian dictionary and we shall find "Byronic" defined by such adjectives as misanthropic, brooding, cynical, theatrical.

After more than two decades of application, Dr Marchand declares, "I can truthfully say that during that time my interest never lessened in the task or in the men. . . . The quality of Sincerity and Strength which Matthew Arnold found in Byron's poetry, shines through his letters in equal measure . . ." Sincerity and strength—those words are a reversal of the idea of a posturing and self-pitying egotist which made so many critics withal so hostile to Byron's egotism. The influence of Byron's influence on earlier generations of poets had been a vulgar error of taste. This latest and last volume exhibits the true Byronic features, of common sense, courage, pathos, humour, and sheer gusto. Besides revealing the sober, far-sighted and dedicated man who joined the Greeks and became the most practical of their supporters, it gives us a number of less than the light too late made their proper chronological order. The volume goes back to his undergraduate days—while, by the most extraordinary chance, a packet of his letters to one of

his most intimate friends, Scrope Berdmore Davies, presented itself as bonus to editor, publisher, and readers.

The discovery of this packet, in a trunk deposited by Serope with his banker before he left England in 1820 to escape imprisonment for debt, will doubtless be the subject of a detailed description in some future publication. Meanwhile, we have here a curious variety of communications of a miscellaneous character, hitherto been something of an off-stage figure. They illustrate what several biographers have observed - that in any substantial batch of letters written by Byron, we find not only vivid brush-strokes in a few pages, but also a clear glimpse of the person to whom they were addressed. The result is that we get a clear insight into his style so clearly to his audience, that we can tell who are the smali-laced and formal (Byron can be extremely good at formality), which have a taste for ribaldry, which possess a humorous and a little intelligence, who needs a high-landed approach and who relies on gossip.

In his letters to Scrope, the clever and factious but rather shallow, hard-drinking, ruinously drinking Cambridge don, Byron is peculiar in being so seemingly heartless yet he often affects sympathy with men of the world: "Hobhouse's brother's wife has brought forth a son—Hobhouse himself is several months gone with hook but has probably felt fewer qualms than his future maker's." This sort of sally was unkind to Hobhouse, but wit is seldom kind. The rumours always being circulated about himself by English travellers Byron denied whimsically: "I harm nobody—I make love but with one woman at a time and am not a rake." Scrope inspired him with that special kind of droopy, languorous place among the shag-headed wits he must have been more sentimental than his friend, assessed in the collections after

two short notes them could have been no conceivable reason for keeping except that they afford some testimony to his happy association with Byron.

Byron's last surviving letter to Scrope (January, 1851) takes him to task both for June 21, 1851, affords a last sad glance at the group of advisers who gave in to "the atrocious state of the day" by strongly opposing the publication of *Don Juan*. That he did publish his glittering masterpiece led to the face of every friend either Shelley gave or more for his strength of mind than even his conduct in the Greek war. Whether his exile resulted in any exsanguination from Scrope is doubtful. The latter was a honorable exile from 1820 onwards. The journal of Hobhouse - by then Lord Broughton - for June 21, 1851, affords a last and glance at him:

As I was getting out of my house at half past eleven in the forenoon I was accosted by an old man, shrivelled and bent, who in a feeble voice asked me if I knew him. I told him I did not. He said "Scrope Deviles". I was much shocked to see the robust active lively companion of my youth shrunk to such a remnant of himself, but I had not seen him since his parting from me at Newgate in 1819. . . . He is still obliged to live abroad, and continues to rotate his King's Fellowship. He will not want it long.

Scrope died the following year in Paris.

The greater part of this eleventh volume consists of Byron's letters and journals from the date of his arrival in Cephalonia to his last written word, dated April 9, 1824. They are addressed to two bankers and are about money—the money he had been pouring out to keep the Greeks going until the arrival of the loan raised on the strength of his name in England, and which was subject, though he did not live to know it, to a

most disgraceful rake-offs and peculations; and the money, long overdue, from Lord Blessington, who had purchased his scarcely used schooner, the *Boliviar*, at a bargain price and paid for it with a draft that was dishonoured. Byron was obliged to give much thought to money because the demands made on him every day were a pressing anxiety.

He was ill and irritable, having had a severe illness more than three weeks after his thirty-sixth birthday—a mysterious attack which, he wrote, “was very painful and had it lasted a moment longer must have extinguished my mortality”. The two young doctors in attendance bled him profusely, which may have considerably undermined him, for he had become a thin, debilitated man. To fit himself for a campaign, he had altered his whole mode of life. He had been available, though reluctantly, from early morning till night for visiting petikloness. He occupied cramped quarters with no privacy, and was unable because of the cold rain which had turned Misolnaghi almost into a swamp, to take the exercise on horseback that he believed was necessary for his health. Moreover, as he noted, trying to account for the illness, he had been “too busy”. “Perhaps not so uniformly busy” may generally afford that I was wont to be.”

He had gone to Greece without any of the romantic notions which caused other enthusiasts to retire, disillusioned, when they found that modern Greeks bore no resemblance to the classical heroes of their schoolbooks. He recognized that after long oppression by the Turks, the Greeks had grown contentious, divided and devious. Their feelings had been made known to him at Cephalonia but he had not expected to be immured, inactive as far as any contact with the enemy was concerned. In so banished a spot as the

**'For a jollie goode Book whereon to looke
Is better to me than Golde.'**

John Wilson, 19th century bookseller, taken from
Everyman's Dictionary of Quotations and Proverbs

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Neuberg, *British Book News* £8.95

The price of exile

By Mark Abley

JOHN COULTER:
In My Day Memoirs
357pp. Toronto: Hounslow Press. \$60.
0 88882 033 X

Is his volume of poetry *The Blossoming Thorns*, John Coulter spoke of "the ambushed grief in the heart of the immigrant-exile... He is a man with himself at war". An Ulsterman by birth and upbringing, Coulter moved to Dublin as a young man, to England as he approached middle age, and to Canada when he was forty-eight. There were good reasons for his many moves, but the moves deprived him of a sense of community and made it difficult for his many plays to reach an audience. "I don't think anyone can emigrate successfully after their mid-thirties," he said in an interview two years ago. "I never did feel truly Canadian and I don't now. Yet I feel more alien in Dublin or London than I do here". Coulter died in Toronto in December 1980, at the age of ninety-two. He was still writing plays; he was still wounded by anonymity.

Coulter did have the satisfaction of seeing his memoirs, *In My Day*, published in a limited edition last autumn, but he never gained the recognition which he deserved and for which he longed. For his career was an important one, especially in the cultural history of his final homeland. The pattern of his work in the 1940s is, indeed, emblematic of the patterns adopted by many Canadian artists since. In a preface to the open *Diary of the Sorrows*, the libretto of which he wrote in 1944 to music by Honley Wilson, Coulter defended his choice of a Gaelic legend as the subject for a Canadian opera: "The art of a Canadian remains, with but little differentiation, the art of the country of his forebears, and the old world heritage of myth and legend remains his heritage, to be used by him for suitable ends." (For the libretto he adapted his earliest play, *Conchobar's Queen*, which had been printed in 1917.) Such a faith did not endure, and as Ireland faded in his memory he could soon proclaim, "A hundred Canadian plays are waiting for Canadians who will write them". This conscious shift of subject-matter foregrounded the nationalistic preoccupations and the new mythos that have become so important in Canadian literature since 1960. The play which seemed to have been waiting for him was a portrait of Louis Riel.

Riel, the Métis poet who inspired and led unsuccessful rebellions against the white settlement of western Canada in 1869 and 1885, has always been a controversial figure: a heroic martyr to many, a villain to many more. Coulter's *Riel*, first produced in 1950, was an early sign of his current rehabilitation. An epic drama in which Coulter drew on Brechtian techniques to tell a story of spiritual pride, personal heroism and political misjudgment, *Riel* was his masterpiece. It remains the finest play yet written about Canadian history. Ambitious in the language and culture of the past, freed Coulter's imagination, which tended to stay earthbound when, as in a dramatized biography of Winston Churchill, he wrote about the present. *Riel* also marked the first occasion on which anyone had used the vast artistic possibilities that underlie the memory of those small revolts: since 1950, Louis Riel has become as familiar to residents of Canada as John Brown to Americans or Pedro Páez to the Irish. For all Coulter's devotion to listening at school corners and bus-stops for the distinctive qualities of Canadian speech, his ear and voice were most at ease among the aphorisms of history. One of his late plays, *Francis Biber*, took as its subject the decadence of New France and the glamorous view of its final inhabitants.

Born in Belfast in 1888, Coulter had grown up in an anglicized patch of city between the Falls Road Catholics and the Shankill Road Protestants, both of whom he later claimed, would beat him up for failing to curse the other side. Though his parents were faithful Protestants, "I was an agnostic before I was out of my teens". His literary ambitions developed when he initially hoped to be a painter, and moved into journalism and playwriting only by way of looking for an income. In 1918 he co-edited the *Irish Review* in trying to extend the work of the Independent Ulster Literary Theatre into that of a professional company with a building of its

own: that is, to provide Belfast with an Abbey. But Yeats proved more interested in telling Coulter about the phases of the moon. When the eruption of civil war ended any hope of establishing a professional theatre in Ulster, he moved to London and began to work for the BBC, writing plays and reporting on tennis matches, yet continuing to edit *The Ulster Review*. In 1927 he became managing editor of *The New Adelphi* under John Middleton Murry, and the pages of his memoirs describing that journal are some of his shrewdest and most acute. Murry, an "obsessed moralist" whom he characterizes as "the most elusive, subtly complex person I have ever met," comes across more sympathetically than he does in most accounts of the period, where he is often dismissed as a vulture who preyed on Katherine Mansfield, a rat who preyed on D. H. Lawrence, or both. Coulter resisted the temptation to become a disciple, but he never lost respect for Murry's intellect, character and critical discernment.

Coulter left England in 1936 only for the purpose of marriage. In London he had fallen in love with a Canadian, Olive Primrose, but when she revisited Toronto she was found to be suffering from TB,

and the doctors forbade travel. Rather than mummifying in England alone, Coulter chose to emigrate. The chapters on his life in Canada between 1936 and 1951 are among the most valuable of *In My Day*, for they record the cultural maturing of a nation. He was a leading member of the Toronto Arts and Letters Club and a founder of the Canadian Arts Council, and although his efforts to win support for a national theatre came to nothing, he did help to persuade his old friend Tyrone Guthrie to visit Ontario and begin the Stratford Festival. These were productive years for Coulter, the years during which his work found its widest audience. But in 1951, encouraged by the interest shown in his plays by the Bristol Old Vic, the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and the Arts Theatre in London, he and his family returned to England. The interest remained theoretical, and when he went back to Toronto in 1958 his own energies had diminished and Canada's attention lay elsewhere. At the age of seventy he was reduced to writing propaganda for Ontario Hydro.

"Bitterness," he once said, "is the sin you must not commit against yourself, or it will seep into all you do". It seeps into

many passages of *In My Day*, particularly when Coulter discusses the oblivion into which most of his work has fallen. Of his twenty-four plays, fewer than half have been given a professional production. He is angrier about the fate of a verse-play, *Sleep, My Pretty One*, which was bought by Laurence Olivier, rehearsed by Irene Worth, praised by Bette Davis, and performed by none of them. His adroit adaptation of *Obolomov*, though broadcast on television and radio in several countries and translated into a dozen languages, has never received a professional stage performance in Ireland, England, Canada or the USA. *The Drums Are Out* (reminiscent of early O'Casey) was a scholastic success at the Abbey in 1948, but its promised revival never came. And his last promise, a play about the Irish poet John Keats, which he wrote in 1950, was never produced. Coulter's work, though it has been successful in some ways, has been largely forgotten in others. He was, perhaps, one of those artists whose failure begins to vitiate.

Perhaps, too, the price he paid for exile

was uncertainty about his own voice. In the words of Mavor Moore, the present chairman of the Canada Council, "his basic tragedy was that of the uprooted man". It was one of his greatest misfortunes that *Riel*, the tragedy of uprooted man, demanded physical resources so great and a leading actor so good that its performances have been far too rare. Moreover, the Irish theatre has shown as little interest in Coulter's Canadian plays as the Canadian theatre has shown in the Irish plays. But in defiance of the evidence of producers, Coulter kept on writing till the end. In 1979 and 1980 he wrote two new plays about love and revised an earlier script, *A Capital of Peace*, about Edmund Kean. His promise span nine decades, and the first memory of nature against a white-washed wall, the horse and you'll get out! For ninety years Coulter lived hard, and his spirit never broke. In its bravery, persistence and dedication to art, no matter how sporadic the rewards, his life became exemplary. Whether struggling in London or struggling in Toronto, he was among the most indomitable of Irishmen.

Against the philistines

By Fleur Adcock

Beginnings New Zealand Writers Tell
How They Began Writing
118pp. Oxford University Press. £4.95.
0 19 558053 2

CHARLES BRASCH:
Indirections
A Memoir 1909-1947
433pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0 19 558050 8

Janet Frame and her little sisters cast themselves as the Brontës: "with a background of poverty, drunkenness, attempted murder and near-madness, it was inevitable that we should feel close to them," she writes. Not all of the contributions to this volume had such painfully dramatic origins to contend with, but most of those who were either not born outsid-

or by their own choice (Frank Sargeson, for example, left his solicitor's job to work part-time on a farm).

The result was literature. At nineteen Maurice Duggan, standing on the platform at the back of a tram because he had not yet mastered the mechanics of bending his new artificial leg at the knee, was handed a white feather. His mates were away at the war; he had turned to books because, after all, "I could read, couldn't I?" So he began filling pages with stories. James K. Baxter, persecuted at school much as his Conscientious Objector parents were persecuted by their neighbours, found that his experiences "created a gap in which the poem was able to grow". Janet Frame fled to London to avoid lifelong confinement in mental hospitals and was told by a doctor that "Why conform? I think you need to write to survive."

These essays were commissioned by Charles Brasch, who in 1947 founded *Landfall*, New Zealand's first literary quarterly, and edited it until 1966: they

are introduced here by the editor of the rival quarterly *Islands*, which is now running a second series of "Beginnings". He points to the role played by sympathetic mothers in the lives of young people brought up against the philistine, male-dominated society of inter-war New Zealand, and to the general impression of perseverance against odds. Another common factor, natural to youthful writers in any society, is secrecy: Bruce Mason calls his arduous scribbles under a flaxbush "a secret and guilty joy"; masturbation, no less.

That art should begin in isolation, in secrecy, and in the face of hostility or contempt is not surprising; but that six of the nine New Zealand-born writers here included (the other contributors are an Englishman and the painter Colin McCahon) should have suffered serious illness is surely a statistic worth examining. Baxter is the only notable member of the group not to have been so afflicted, and he was an alcoholic, which seemed to him a fair enough expiation.

Brasch commissioned more "Beginnings" than he published, and he hoped they would "act as a spur and encouragement to other writers, especially the young". Possibly his inclination was towards writers who had overcome severe difficulties; certainly an equal number of New Zealanders of this generation (his own) grew up to be poets or novelists without ill-health or accident. Individually, these accounts show interestingly varied attitudes to their authors' experiences: bitterness, resentment, gratitude, surprise. Collectively, they amount to a batch of moral tales, and have illuminating things to say about New Zealand's social history as well as about the literary vocation.

Charles Brasch's own beginnings, up to the time when he had conceived and was about to embark upon the publication of *Landfall*, make a striking contrast to these accounts of hardship and precarious survival, although in his own very different circumstances he had problems enough. "That struggle for breath seemed now symptomatic," he wrote (of childhood asthma which he outgrew): "Living was never afterwards to come to me easily." It was not ill-health which hampered him.

The story is told in his posthumous memoir, edited by his friend James Baxter and much reduced from the very long manuscript which Brasch had been slowly but partially revising when he died in 1973. He was born into a German-Jewish family whose forebears had made their way to Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century; they were energetic, successful in business and, by the time Charles was born in 1909, wealthy. His mother died before he was five, and in the face of his father's evident disappointment with the boy, his bookish son who showed no interest in the family home, Charles turned increasingly to his maternal grandfather, William Felix, the

"rock and centre" of his life. Felix was a man of many enthusiasms: a choral scholar, a botanist, a connoisseur and actor with a particular interest in Mac culture, a generous and expert benefactor to the Otago Museum. He loved and trusted his grandson without demanding that he should prove to justify himself; this memoir adds to his debt.

Brasch was slow to find his mother; he knew that he wanted to be a poet, but "if you're a poet, you must have a message," said his father, and young Charles took many years to learn that this was not so. Meanwhile he went to Oxford, joined an archaeological dig in Egypt, travelled widely in Europe, and met friends with writers, painters and musicians. Drifting in his case was not accompanied by poverty; he was cushioned by family money, although it hurt him that he had not enough to help struggling friends. But a private income could console him for the aimlessness of these years.

In 1936, however, he was invited to teach at a small, unconventional school for disturbed children, and this discovery of his natural sympathy with the young, later to be so valuable in his editorial work, was a defining moment. He fostered it (When he briefly visited New Zealand in 1938 the poet Ursula Bethell advised him to give up writing and to become a "patron" - which, in fact, he eventually became, almost secretly organizing fellowships and endowments for all projects of the arts, without, however, ceasing to write.)

Indirections is a record of Brasch's family (aunts, cousins and a stepmother), his friendships (with Don Graydon, Oliver, Robin Hyde, Tony Woodhouse, E. J. Scovell, Frederick and Eve Bay among many others); his gradual process of self-education and self-discovery; and his eventual commitment to New Zealand tastes and personality. He spent the war years in England, working first as a fire warden and then in the Foreign Office Intelligence Centre at Blenheim Palace but, because of his expatriate friends, he began to feel drawn to New Zealand once more. He loved the landscape of the South Island, as his poems witness, and adopted a few brave people working as poets in the arts; but there were also the "faint, slovenly, spiritless New Zealand poets" and the "provincialism" and "the ancient distrust of people who have travelled and lived abroad, and developed their own standards".

Certain passages in *Indirections* make Brasch sound anguished or cold; but he was neither. He was a rational man, without being detached (the former, a painful combination), but modern, sympathetic and generous. The book, though it is, certainly does not fill all

ing the young." Nabokov wrote out his lectures, as his former student, Rosa Wetzstein tells us, "word for word, down to the very end of the sentence, never changed them. I suspect that his merry suggestion to have them delivered via tape recorder was not meant to be taken altogether as a joke. As it is, his wife, Vera, who for seventeen years at Wells, Wellesley, and Cornell sat in the front row of all of his classes, typed up his lecture notes, graded his students' papers, and chauffeured him around. So teaching for Nabokov was mostly educating himself. Studying up on *Olympe*, he told his obsequious Boswell, Alfred Appel, Jr., was the best part of the education he received at Cornell.

Of the one lecture by Nabokov I caught, when he was guest lecturer at Harvard, I remember only two things: that Anna Karenina should really be Anna Karenin in English, and that although the lecturer was not against Nabokov's teaching repertoire were he published to a second volume) by an important novelist who was also an ingenious, albeit highly idiosyncratic critic. It is, next, an evaluation of great-and, in one case, decently minor-novels by one who was easily the equal of Stevenson, and believed himself the equal of all.

This is, furthermore, a teaching book, and shows us Nabokov the pedagogue, scholar, and annotator, not unlike (in fact, very much like) such characters of his own devising as Pnin, Charles Kinbote, John Jay, Jr., PhD, and the complex of that vast set of notes to the translation of *Eugene Onegin*. Finally, there is a good deal of self-revelation here: *Lectures on Literature* tells us about as much of Nabokov's likes and dislikes in the art of writing as *Speak, Memory* tells us of his predilections and antipathies in the business of living. There may be even a further level, almost coincidental but not negligible: a refresher course in some material-fiction.

To start with the most obvious aspect of the book: Nabokov was a learned, meticulous, fastidious, erratic, and frustrating teacher. A great actor, he would read out - indeed, perform - large chunks of the novels under discussion, thus also saving on the number of original pearls he had to cast before the students. In between the readings came critical evaluations that were often based on chalked-up chronological charts, maps, diagrams, and so forth. Some looked as if they were of what Grogan Sarmas looked as a beetle or what sort of orchids Swinburne's "Ode to a Lily" was anything that would amuse the literary detective, collector, collector of ephemera and curiosities, and creator of words elsewhere that was the lecture.

Nabokov is commanding here, "not as a writer, but as a man, a man with a fixed address, the much abused ivory tower" in the *Paris Review* interview, however, asked to evaluate his teaching experience at Cornell, he answered: "A first-rate college library with a comfortable campus around it is a fine milieu for a writer. There is of course the problem of educa-

tion on my part to be treasured all your lives. Some Gregors, some Joes and Jans, do not know that they have wings." There is no question that Saint Vladimir had little doubt about his own strong opinions and opinions. But what did his winged words do to his students? In the introduction, John Updike tells us about his wife, who took Nabokov's *Lectures*. 311-312 (knows on campus as "Dirty Lit."), that "she cannot to this day take Thomas Mann seriously".

And how does Nabokov perform here as an interpreter and evaluator of his chosen writers? Not very well on James Austen, whom he picked at Edmund Wilson's insistence. He enjoys some of her ironies, pays a wan compliment to her feel for the not just, makes up some curious critical terminology ("knights' move", "dimpled prose") for her "collection of eggshells in cotton wool", and

finally dismisses her in a palinode at the start of his Dickens lectures: "I dislike Dickens and the minor arts. It is hard to read *Mansfield Park*, as he said elsewhere, was an excuse to read or reread, and to inflict on the students, works misread by the characters in the novel, with the result 'I think I had more fun than my class'."

Some of the heaviest jokes are at the expense of despised writers or respected competitors. "The sociological side [of Dickens], brilliantly stressed for example by Edmund Wilson... is neither interesting nor important." "Lady Dedlock is redeemed by suffering, and Dostoevski is wildly gesticulating in the background" compared to Kafka, Rilke and Thomas Mann are "blatant or plaster saints". Swinburne is identified as "an English post-romantic minor poet"; Freud, the blackest of *hates nudes*, is "a medieval witch doctor"; and there is a passing reference to "one bore, a man called Stuart Gilbert".

Along with this studied denigration comes also ingenious self-praise. "Every artist in a manner of saint (I feel not myself myself)..." "I cannot imagine in the *Paris Review* interview, however, asked to evaluate his teaching experience at Cornell, he answered: "A first-rate college library with a comfortable campus around it is a fine milieu for a writer. There is of course the problem of educa-



tion on my part to be treasured all your lives. Some Gregors, some Joes and Jans, do not know that they have wings." There is no question that Saint Vladimir had little doubt about his own strong opinions and opinions. But what did his winged words do to his students? In the introduction, John Updike tells us about his wife, who took Nabokov's *Lectures*. 311-312 (knows on campus as "Dirty Lit."), that "she cannot to this day take Thomas Mann seriously".

Partly, I suppose, because Vladimir Sorokov used to read Dickens in English out loud to his family, Vladimir Junior is much more at home in *Black House* than he was in *Mansfield Park*. He is especially good on the way local colour - nature, landscapes, weather - is tied to individual personalities, and on the theme of absurd but heroically coping children. Rightly, I think, he expostulated: "I should not like to bear the charge of sentimentality made against this strain that runs through *Black House*. I want to submit that people who denounce the sentimental are, generally unaware of what sentiment is." And he insists that the death of Little Joe "is a lesson in style, not in participative emotion".

But it is with Flaubert that Nabokov comes into his own, and here he makes some quite surprising points, such as his demonstration that *Madame Bovary* is in many respects neither realistic nor naturalistic, that "in point of fact, all fiction is fiction. All art is deception." What Flaubert has created is a (very Nabokovian) "world of fancy with its own logic", and *Madame Bovary* is not "a landmark of so-called realism, whatever that is". Nabokov is at great pains to show that

the "romantic" world of Emma and her lovers is just as bourgeois and nearly as crass as that of the more obviously middle-class and materialistic characters, and that the only ones who rise above it are little Justin and, in his final ability to forgive and dumbly love us, poor Charles.

For Nabokov, as for his father before him, Flaubert is the supreme master; without him, there would have been no Proust and Joyce ("despite superficial contradictions, Joyce has [not] gone any further than Flaubert"), and even Chokhov "would not have been quite Chokhov". It is quite a comedown to go from *Madame Bovary* to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Presumably the Stevenson novella (which Wilson advised him against) appealed to Nabokov - though he doesn't say so - because of the theme of the double, or rather the hero's living antithesis, in this case receding in the same body. It is as if Humbert Humbert and Clare Quilty were the same person, which, in a sense, they are even in Nabokov. Certainly our professor is unable to make a very compelling case for Stevenson's greatness, despite all the street plans and house facades he draws for his students (the bipartite Jekyll-Hyde residence is an architectural analogue for the dual protagonists) and makes them copy. He insists on the artistry with which Stevenson (whose name he sometimes misspells as "Stapenson") creates an atmosphere that makes the implausibilities of his story believable and allows it to have "the impact of satisfactory and artistic reality". This phrase is prototypical of Nabokov's artistic philosophy: a novel is real because it has satisfactory semblance at reality, because that semblance is achieved by artistic (artful) means, and because the whole produces the right impact on the reader. But Nabokov is also aware of Stevenson's weaknesses, and this section reads at times like an uneasy apologia.

With *A la Recherche de temps perdu*, for which he rightly rejects Scott Moncrieff's cow, Nabokov is in his element again. In *Search of Lost Time* is "the greatest novel of the first half of the twentieth century", which, we should recall, is the half that did not produce *Lolita*, *Pnin*, *Pale Fire*, and *Ada*. "He expatiates helpfully on the ability of Proust 'to fill in and stretch out the sentence to its utmost breadth and length... In verbal generosity he is a veritable Santa'." And, again, he calls attention to the important fact that "Proust's conversation and his descriptions merge into one another, creating a new reality where flower and leaf and insect belong to the same blossoming tree". Though he denies having the slightest interest in biographical criticism, he interprets certain of Proust's fictional strategies in terms of the author's homosexuality. There are many fine insights here, but the section ends lamely, perhaps because Nabokov (with some justification) felt that he could assign only the first volume of the huge novel to his students. Even though he does bring in references to and conclu-

sions from other parts of the work, his analyses are largely limited to the actual argument.

On Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Nabokov is less interesting than on the others, possibly because it is the only book he did not read in the original; despite the many years spent in Berlin, he never learned German thoroughly, as he regretfully admits. Nevertheless, he does make some amusing entomological points: "Neither Gregor nor Kafka saw beetle any too clearly", and he proceeds to show that the creature is no cockroach; we also get such homely historical sidelights as "In Prague, 1912, it was much more difficult to clean and cook than in Ithaca, 1954"; not to mention such odd Nabokovian idiosyncrasies as the opinion that "music, as perceived by its consumers, belongs to a more primitive, more animal form in the scale of arts than literature or painting".

On *Ulysses*, which gets the longest treatment, Nabokov is good, though he deliberately underplays the importance of symbols, is unduly unresponsive to Joyce's wild humour, and repeatedly complains of the book's sociology and obscurity with a plainness worthy of Pnin. There is a very fine explication of how the stream of consciousness works, a genuine feeling for the characters, an infectious appreciation of how the topography, the city colours the action. There is also an interesting, though perhaps not entirely convincing, demonstration that the mysterious man in the brown mackintosh is Joyce himself; a provocative assertion that Molly's and Leopold's interior monologues "exaggerate the verbal side of thought... Man thinks also to images"; and a disparagement, correct to my mind, of *Finnegans Wake* as "one of the greatest failures in literature", although the ambiguity of "greatest" in this context, necessary to my mind, was not intended by Nabokov. Here, too, there is the one obvious misreading Nabokov commits when he assumes that Buck Mulligan, on the first page of the novel, "tells God to switch off the current". He is, of course, talking to Haines.

The concluding lecture, entitled "The Art of Literature and Common Sense", is particularly rich in revelations about Nabokov's attitudes toward literature and the nature and role of the writer. Most interesting is the notion that criminals are people lacking imagination; if they had a creative fantasy, "they would have had to seek an outlet in fiction and make the characters in their books do more, thoroughly what they might themselves have hungry in real life". Even more provocative is a passage about how a creative writer "cannot help feeling that in his rejecting the world of the matter-of-fact, in his taking sides with the irrational, the illogical, the inexplicable and the fundamentally good, he is performing something similar in a rudimentary way to what... Here the sentence breaks off: two manuscript pages are missing. Similar in a rudimentary way to whom, one wonders. God, I suspect, somewhat in the manner of that Flaubertian statement about the writer's godlike, livable

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BODLEY HEAD

commentary

Sold into slavery

By Alan Bell

"Oh please Mr Tiger!"
National Library of Scotland

The Helen Bannerman exhibition which opened recently at the National Library of Scotland, and continues until the end of June, is full of pleasant surprises - not least a rather bonny-looking stuffed tiger in the middle of the exhibition room. The author of *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, born in Edinburgh, was the rather retiring wife of a distinguished Indian Medical Service research worker, and her long service in India - much of it spent next door to plague laboratories and experimental rat-pit - led her to send her children regular and charmingly-illustrated newsletters while they were being educated in Scotland. These letters were treasured by their recipients, and the many samples on show reveal the naïve skill which gave *Sambo* much a simple and direct appeal to children when it was first published in 1899.

The copyright was sold outright for five pounds to Graef Richards, who put it out as one of his 'Dumpy Books for Children' with immediate success. The author did not share in the profits and lost control of the book, to its later disadvantage. Many others followed - *Quasimodo*, *Mingo* and lesser-known works like *Pat and the Spider* (written for her son) and *Little Doggie-Head* (a straw-wedger tale about a girl who would poke the fire and found herself with a cooking-pot on her shoulder). There was even the posthumous *Little White Squibbo* of 1966, an unsatisfactory

'realization' of notes found in Mrs Bannerman's papers, which perhaps owes more to a daughter than to Helen herself.

Little White Squibbo reveals an element of self-parody in its author, but the whiteness of its title may be intentionally defensive, an emblem of *Little Black Sambo* was apparent even in the author's lifetime. The title itself, originally chosen as a specific name and not as a generic derogative, proved objectionable to those who found in 'Sambo' only abuse of Southern niggers and echoes of slavery. It is difficult for those who know only the British editions (now published by Chatto and Windus) to realize the strength of American objections, but the Edinburgh exhibition shows how lack of legal control by the author led to a mass of pirated editions with tasteless illustrations by other hands. The charming, brave, enterprising and always successful spirit of Helen Bannerman's drawings turned, in some of the worst American editions, into a greedy plantation-nigger goilwog. A problem obviously exists, and it is only partly explained by the bibliographical variations apparent to even the youngest visitor. And it is not out that can be whitewashed: almost the worst exhibit of all is a *Little Brave Sambo*, with a noseless, freckled bell-top as a hero even more unappealing than *Little White Squibbo*.

Elizabeth Hay, who devised the exhibition, has written a combined biography of Helen Bannerman and study of the reactions to *Little Black Sambo*, which will be published under the title *Sambo Solilo* by Paul Harris later this month.



Little Black Sambo, not as depicted by Helen Bannerman - who sold the copyright - but as an American edition published by McLoughlin Brothers in the 1930s. The picture comes from the exhibition reviewed here.

The end of the Old Believers

By Derrick Puffett

Khovanshchina
BBC TV and Radio

Khovanshchina - occupied Muscovy from 1872 until his death nine years later. It belongs to his richest creative period - the period of the revised *Boris*, the *Songs and Dances of Death*, and the piano *Pictures* - and might have been a masterpiece. But he approached the composition in so disorganized a fashion - writing words and music simultaneously and working out the plot as he went along - that it never got beyond the sketches. After his death it suffered the fate of almost all Russian operas, being completed and orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov. This in the version used by the Bolshoi, whose production was broadcast on April 4. (There is another, better version by Shostakovich, which was recently performed in New York with great success.)

The title means 'The Revolt of the Khovansky', and the plot deals with events in Russian history around 1682. Prince Ivan Khovansky wishes to overthrow the Romanovs and install his son Andrei as tsar. He is supported by the militia and seeks the support of a religious zeal, the Old Believers, headed by Dozfel. The Romanovs do not appear in person but are represented by Prince Galtai, the Empress's lover and a descendant of Western reform (it was a descendant of his who commissioned the opera). Dozfel is a fanatical zealot, a member of the Old Believers in love with Andrei, and a Protestant girl whom he persecutes. The action is complicated and ends with the mass suicide of the Old Believers in a forest.

OYongé Fresshe Folkës, Hee or Shee

They look so beautiful, that's how they look - but some of them have been into a book. They look so fresh and innocent (because they've got to) however hard they try (they do try) not to. Yet, evil's there, unmissable or just misadventures, a baby face can be that of a criminal.

While we look full of year and vice untold, simply because we happen to be old. Tired eyes, a stoop, a neck so like a vulture's - these are the hallmarks of our Silver Culture. They have the Force, testosterone or cortisol, we're for our pain - the joy of being illiterate!

Gavin Ewart

commentary

Living both ends

By Stanley Wells

Timon of Athens
BBC TV

The play survives only in a text with serious loose ends and much unpolished dialogue, seemingly laid aside without being brought to completion. Editors have struggled to create a coherence acceptable to readers, inevitably, and justifiably, directors brave enough to grapple with it make changes to fit it into shape.

It is problematical to critics as well as to textual scholars; but for all its imperfections it fascinates in its style - undeniably characteristic enough to support the theory that Shakespeare had Middleton as a collaborator - its inventive, its pathos, and the imaginative intensity underlying its parody of Timon who, as his keenest critic the cynic Apemantus puts it, never knew 'the middle of humanity... but the extremity of both ends'.

Jonathan Miller's direction emphasizes the similar polarity in the play's structure. He intensifies the first of the two parts into which it is divided - up to Timon's self-banishment - partly by textual manipulation, partly by skilful use of Tony Abbot's flexible set, which concentrates the action on Timon's palace, a grand establishment of massive, stilted stone walls and columns. Costumes are Jacobean; Athens is not visually evoked, nor is the corruption of its society suggested except through individual characterization.

In the opening conversation of Poet and Painter at a reception, John Fortuna's impersonation of the anonymous Poet, inventively - and irrelevantly - funny to those who recognize its devastatingly accurate mimicry of Sir Hux Wieldon, may seem irritatingly precious to those who do not. But the burden of the play falls primarily on the performances of Timon and Apemantus. In the opening episodes, Jonathan Miller 'wakes Timon young, courteous, self-effacing, touchingly naïve in the pleasure that he takes in pleasing. His aristocratic banquet - masses of real food - reflects the recurrent imagery of food and eating with which the dramatist explores true and false values. Timon responds generously to the masque, an admirable piece of period reconstruction, and his sympathy in the dance which the director continues as background to the rest of the scene.

As Apemantus - Timon's antithesis before his disillusionment - Norman Rodway displays a disconcerting gentility. He is one with the lords, not visually distinguished from them, so outsider 'dropping after all

... discontentedly, like himself', as the original direction has it. Nor is he given 'a taste to himself', as Timon instructs. The other guests accept him as a predictable eccentric; his satirical grace before meat does not shock, but is greeted as an expected, familiar comic turn. The performance, beautifully poised and spoken, lacks asperity. All the same, the first part of the play emerges as an excellent piece of serious comedy: Timon's flatterers are funny without being grotesque, and the mock-banquet at which he exposes them is a well-timed study in embarrassment.

But as the play moves closer to tragedy, the performance becomes less satisfactory. Presumably limitations of setting dictated that Timon's farewell should be curtailed and spoken within his own house. It makes a climax, but the emotion is generalized because uncontrolled. The grim set for the second part resembles a desert rather than a beach. Again, Shakespeare's unimpaired focus on Timon in the play's closing stretch makes cruel demands on the actor. Jonathan Miller has not lessened them. There is little rearrangement; even the false cue for the Poet and Painter is retained. Jonathan Price is emaciated and stricken with sores. His visible suffering contrasts well with Norman Rodway's continuing suavity, but their quarrel lacks the proper divine fury. He is most effective when relatively calm, as in the episode with the bandits; but his anger and despair need stronger control over the eloquent language: fewer gasps, sniffs and sharp intakes of breath. The episode with Flavius (John Welsh), in which Timon finds that there is 'one honest man', is over-assertive, unconvincing because lacking simplicity.

Odd direction does not help. For Timon to burrow into the shingle beneath a block of marble which becomes his tomb, and to address all his speeches to the Senators, is interesting enough as a symbol of withdrawal - anoxia is perhaps a good explanation for his death - but to show nothing but his head upside-down throughout his later speeches seems wilful and constricting. More important (though undetectable in the circumstances), the suggestion in Timon's awareness of a world elsewhere, a dying vision beyond the ordinary realistic banquet, is a carefully studied remark later recounted. The court record reads:

The evidence of Giles Chores testifies and saith that... sometimes last week I flit an ox as well out of the woods about a noon and he laying down in the yard. I went to raise him to yoke him, but he would not rise but drag his LINDER PARTS as if he had been high shot, but after due rise, I had a cat sometimes last week strangely taken on the sulk and, and did make me think she would have died presently my wife bid me knock her in the

Timon of Athens is due for publication in the autumn in the BBC Shakespeare series, along with the *Dream*, *Titus* and *Othello*.

Running the straight race

By Richard Brown

Chorus of Fire
Odyssey Cinema, Haymarket

Chorus of Fire tells the stirring tale of two Gold Medalists from the 1924 Paris Olympics. Apparently no demonstration (in the sense of the theory) that the fuel that fires the will to win is the same for any two men. There is Harold Abrahams, one of two spunky, vigorous set of undergraduates at Cambridge, determined to achieve the extra success which will prove him to himself in the face of anti-semitic prejudice. He is helped by a Jewish friend, a Jewish friend of Englishness that he is encouraged to feel, as well as the human achievements. *Chorus of Fire* comes at the right time to enjoy, perhaps greatly to increase, an audience for optimism and all-round moral health created in part by Peter Yates's excellent cycling film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

The most obvious clue to its likely success is the way the film manages to avoid giving offence. Despite its clear appeal to traditionally right-wing virtues of indi-

Taken strange

By Stephen Fender

The Crucible
Comedy Theatre and BBC TV

'I had known of the Salem witch hunt for many years before "McCarthyism" had arrived', writes Arthur Miller in the introduction to his *Collected Plays*, 'and it had always remained an inexplicable darkness to me.' And so it might. Were the girls bewitched, or caught up in a form of mass hysteria, or just pretending? Did old women really mutter spells, or were they just lonely? What forces of state authority, community pressure or individual motive fuelled the witch trials. And what was Salem like to live in? A border town? A provincial village? Does anyone really know?

As if to assuage his doubts about what moved these people, Miller threw in every motive he could think of. The girls want to protect themselves from punishment for having danced in the woods. The Reverend Parris fears he may lose his ministry. Goody Putnam has lost seven babies and envies Goody Nurse her ample progeny. Goodman Putnam is land-hungry. The Reverend Hale, the expert witch-finder, has his profession to guard; a witchlike authenticator him. Giles Corey is a litigious old man. John Proctor has seduced, or been seduced by, Abigail Williams. Abigail wants John for her husband, so she designs on his wife, Elizabeth. And so forth.

Much of this is made believable by the economy of dialogue in Miller's opening scenes. Even the adultery (the real Abigail was eleven years old at the time) works well enough in the way it complicates Proctor's struggle for the truth, whereas Willy Loman's adultery in *Death of a Salesman* is one reason too many for his sons' loss of faith in him. And Miller does not blink the fact, as a lesser interpreter might have done, that the girls really were possessed of something outside their consciousness. Yet deeper mysteries remain. One small detail has always puzzled me. The historical Giles Corey testified against his wife in court, not (as in the play) in an offhand remark later recounted. The court record reads:

The evidence of Giles Chores testifies and saith that... sometimes last week I flit an ox as well out of the woods about a noon and he laying down in the yard. I went to raise him to yoke him, but he would not rise but drag his LINDER PARTS as if he had been high shot, but after due rise, I had a cat sometimes last week strangely taken on the sulk and, and did make me think she would have died presently my wife bid me knock her in the

Apart from the occasional cut to a facial close-up to register a hearer's reaction to a speech, very few television liberties are taken. On the other hand, everyone concerned seizes the inevitable advantage over the stage. The girls can conspire in the wings, illuminated by fire and candlelight; emotions can be seen to flare across faces. The face of Eric Porter, as Deputy Governor Danforth, seems to grow more creased with anxiety by the minute. He only wants the facts. Even Parris (Dennis Quilley) expresses micro-seconds of sensitivity - a mistake, perhaps, since it invites the audience to be rather more inward with the character than it might wish.

On the stage, where facial expressions are less important than words and gestures, the individual dilemmas are less of a distraction. Surely this is as it should be. Though the BBC television version is nearly flawless, the conventional stage is still the best place for the play, because *The Crucible* is a drama more of words than of individual sensibilities. That is why Proctor is willing to sacrifice his person and his honour, but not his name. 'The Devil is in the house', says Hale in the full flood of his confidence. 'Preach', 'Preach', 'Preach', the ironic key words of *The Crucible*, the language of this community, for all its apparent toughness, has grown estranged from the moral realities it purports to represent.

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to the editor

English Revolutions

Sir, - I am not so alert as Lawrence Stone (Letters, April 10) to defend my own positions, especially in a field in which, I am glad to say, research is proceeding apace. Nor do I think it seems in a reviewer to challenge criticisms of his own work when they only constitute a minute proportion (one paragraph) of the book in question. Now that he has gratuitously drawn your readers' attention to these criticisms, however, I will just say that while my own thesis, in 1977, that in the early eighteenth century Filmer was still a much more influential political theorist than Locke, may have been a trifle exaggerated, Stone's retreat on old-fashioned Whig Lockephorism is even more at odds with the findings of current scholarship, though I must wait with what equanimity I can muster the shocks which according to him are in store for me in the *Historical Journal*.

Similarly, much of what he has to say about the Dissenters in the 1690s is conventional wisdom subjected to slight exaggeration. I certainly did not mean to imply that the Dissenters were of no political importance (though Whig leaders from 1710 onwards obviously thought so), but I did find it difficult to conceive, for instance, that after the Restoration "control of the major cities passed to the extended Dissentist interest", and by implication remained with them.

As for Stone's essay on "The Growth of London", I can now see that my remarks may have given the impression that it is composed of standard secondary authorities. This is not so. True, only 5 out of his 82 footnotes refer to unprinted material, and it appears that only one of them makes an important point, but otherwise he has ransacked monographs, articles and printed evidence and composed from them, with his

accustomed skill, a coherent and interesting story. May I be forgiven for suggesting that the results are not commensurate with the labour involved, or the space devoted to it in this festschrift?

On the other hand I must admit that my remark that his essay on "The Results of the English Revolution" was devoted to the period before 1642 is a quite unintentional misrepresentation, for which I apologise. (I make it 15 pages out of 78, not 5 out of 101, but the point is taken.)

J.P. KENYON

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'Post-Modern Classicism'

Sir, - For a writer it is useful to keep in mind the notion of the average reader and, after reading Nicholas Penny's review of my *Post-Modern Classicism* (April 3), I can also see the point of understanding the average reader. A good misreader systematically misunderstands a piece of writing strictly according to average stereotypical views without the interference of his own thoughts. Thus Penny's virtues. Most viewers trained in the canons of traditional architectural classicism (Vitruvius et al) will misunderstand *Post-Modern Classicism* as if pointed out because it doesn't seek the "ideal proportions" (which Penny also seeks). Semantic concerns, and the proportional systems, which are used, are discontinuous. This Free-Style proportion, which may vary across a structure, should be contrasted with the integrated systems of Alberti, Palladio and the Neo-Classicalists, although there are some architects today, such as Leon Krier, who adopt them.

In addition to missing ideal proportions, Penny finds "monumentality", "solemnity and grandeur", also lacking. Yes, and he would also miss a great deal of other classical

trappings - modillions, astragals and so forth. OED the new style is not classical. This book response, shared by Siraghi Revolutions, is predictable and probably even beneficial since it clarifies the average differences between the canonic and free style classicism. Egyptian architecture, as well as Romanesque, Gothic, Mannerist, some Baroque, Rococo and nineteenth-century classicism, belongs to the latter type, along with Post-Modern Classicism. By contrast Greek architecture, some Roman, Renaissance and Neo-Classical, building characterizes the canonic variety. Revivals, especially academic ones, have tended to favour a more strict adherence to canons. But both general types should be known to fully understand either one; systematic misunderstandings read one type as the other and find it, not surprisingly, at fault.

While Penny is right to speak of a "competitive idiosyncrasy" in some of the recent work he is wrong to overlook the "common purpose" which unites so many of these architects: the search for a richer language of architecture; the role of architecture as a public art to communicate clearly with the public; the search for continuity, tradition, roots, even the authority of precedent. These shared goals were reiterated by the architects as well as by myself.

CHARLES JENCKS
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'Retreat from Power'

Sir, - Keith Wilson's assertion (Letters, April 10) that Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir Arthur Nicolson were Russophobes and that Russophobia shows a complete ignorance of the facts. (To bracket them together is in itself different.) Neither of them was a Russophobe. But Nicolson, as there is ample evidence to show in his own papers as well as unpublished foreign office records, was undoubtedly a most ardent Russophile. Crowe, on the other hand, was neither a Russophile nor a Russophile. Like Nicolson he believed in the reality of the German menace and the necessity therefore of upholding the Anglo-Russian Entente in order to maintain the balance of power in Europe. But, unlike Nicolson, he did not think that it was necessary, for this reason, to truckle to every Russian demand in Persia, where her expansionist activities were threatening some of our most vital interests. Nor did he share Nicolson's mistaken belief that there was an imminent danger, otherwise of a Russo-German rapprochement. The only way, in his view, to prevent Russia from overrunning the whole of Persia and reaching the Gulf, was to leave her a free hand in the North, where she would do nothing to stop her, but at the same time to establish a strong British influence over the Neutral as well as the British spheres in Southern Persia. Nicolson was at first opposed to such a policy both

because it would offend Russia and because it meant the partition of Persia. But eventually, like everyone else, including Grey, he was persuaded by Crowe that this was the only possible course. It had been officially decided upon when war broke out in 1914. But it was not finally realized until March 1915, when Russia, in a secret agreement with Britain, agreed to recognize the supremacy of British imperialism in the Caucasus. It was the British sphere of Persia, in return for a completely free hand for herself in the North and the promise of Constantinople after the war. Far from being, as Keith Wilson suggests, a move that marked the end of Indian security by establishing a common frontier with Russia in Central Asia, it was one that safeguarded that security by assuring to Britain complete control of the approaches to India by land and by sea. The alternative, had Russia been left unopposed to her own devices, would have been the control by the Russians of both.

SIBYLE CROWE

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CHARLES JENCKS
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'Retreat from Power'

Sir, - With regard to Keith Wilson's comment (April 10) on Paul Kennedy's review of my *Retreat from Power* (March 20), the question to be raised is not the range of Dr Wilson's evidence but his interpretation of it. It was perfectly possible to strongly support the Anglo-Russian entente (particularly on European grounds) and still oppose the Turkish Empire (Eyre Crowe in 1914 is not the only Foreign Office example). The point really at issue is whether the Foreign Office and the diplomats, after 1905, were more concerned with the German threat to the balance of power or with the Russian ambitions which continued to pose a serious threat to British Imperial interests. The best evidence for Dr Wilson's case for the latter reading comes from the writings of Arthur Nicolson, George Buchanan, and, at times, from Charles Hardinge, all three former or serving ambassadors at St Petersburg. His evidence for Grey's views, in this essay at least, is ambivalent; other and more numerous citations from Eyre Crowe and Louis Mallet (not to speak of William Tyrrell, to whom Dr Wilson does not refer) point in the opposite direction. The difficulty, as Dr Wilson suggests in his letter, is that the problem, which depends less on a specific citation than on a general assessment of the view of each participant, is too complex to be treated in an essay of twenty pages. With Dr Kennedy, I continue to believe that it was the fear of German ambitions and the balance of power in Europe, rather than the position of the British Empire in Central and East Central Asia, which was uppermost in Foreign Office thinking, without denying the continued importance of the latter, particularly after 1912. One will read Dr Wilson's book with interest.

ZARA STEINER

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Italian Designers

Sir, - While it may be the case that some architects and designers - Le Corbusier, Gropius, for instance - may have had a certain affinity with Italian culture, it seems astonishing to Sir James Richards, in his review of Sir Cyril Dujin's book, *Casali Familiari* (April 3), writing dismissively about Enzo Sottsass, Alessandro Mendini, Bruno Zevi and Gio Ponti (see *Architectural Review* editor, and you must, to learn that Signor Mendini is the editor of *Domus* - which has replaced the *Architectural Review* as the leading international magazine concerned with culture and design - as well as being a design and the others are today's leading Italian designers.

To say nothing of the satirical ascription of his remarks - "can there really be a parody of 'famous' contemporary Italian design called...?" - he writes - it is and is to be Sir James, who once worked so tirelessly for himself in bringing advanced ideas from the Continent to Britain, setting, perhaps, the standards as an agent of the post-war modernism and design which he has so bedevilled English culture (and which, I might be added, is a recurrent feature of your own journal).

STEPHEN BAYLEY

Le Basil, Souillac, Lot 42, France.

Eric Partridge

Sir, - In Roy Harris's review of a subject of Eric Partridge (March 20), there was a reference to his venture into publishing in the early 1930s and to his subsequent bankruptcy. This refers to the Crypt House Press, Gloucester, Ed Partridge's partner in this enterprise was his father, Francis Cobb, then recently retired from the Sudan. Indeed I think my father provided some at least of the financial backing, and he certainly lost whatever he put into it.

RICHARD COBE

Worcester College, Oxford.

G. B. Edwards

Sir, - In Eric Korn's perceptive review of G.B. Edwards's *The Book of Ebenezer le Page* (March 27) there is an error in the date of birth. Edwards was born on July 8, 1891, not 1889. It should perhaps also be noted that only out of courtesy to his former boss, but he did not spend his last years in a boarding-house in Weymouth, but lived in the private house (and symposium) of Mr and Mrs Bert Seng, 10 Dorchester Road just outside that town.

EDWARD P. DE G. CHANER

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PHILOSOPHY

When I disagrees with Me

By David Pears

M.R. HAIGHT
A Study of Self-Deception
165pp. Brighton: Harvester, £16.95.
0 8527 918 4

Self-deception is a difficult concept. If we take the name literally, it seems to make its own application impossible because it requires a person to adopt two incompatible roles. As the object of the deception he must accept the very belief that he has rejected in the role of subject. So perhaps it is better to take the kind of case that we would all diagnose as self-deception in real life and to inquire how closely such cases approximate to the name's literal, but impossible suggestion.

M. R. Haight, like most philosophers, starts with the first approach. She demonstrates at some length that, if the demands made by the concept are meant literally, it is impossible to maintain that there are cases in which this conclusion might seem to be avoidable, but neither of them is successful.

STEPHEN BAYLEY
PENNY SPARK
Le Basil, Souillac, Lot 42, France.

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order to eliminate this hypothesis we need a theory about the identification of the speaker behind the voice.

Haight simply says that the hypnotic agent fails the communication test. She then supplies a theoretical consideration, but it is a qualification pointing in the opposite direction. She suggests that, when a splinter falls the communication test, we are less disinclined to attribute consciousness to it if it is complex.

This is a suggestion worth exploring. If the hypnotist had issued enough instructions to cover the next day in the subject's life, we might possibly be inclined to say that the hypnotic agent was conscious. However, in that case our reasoning would be faulty. We would be arguing that the limit of what he could achieve without consciousness had been exceeded; but a computer can play chess and Haight, for one, would not attribute consciousness to it.

It seems that the complexity that she means is not the complexity of a strategy but the complexity of an integrated personality. But even that kind of complexity would not justify an attribution of consciousness to a splinter which failed the communication test. For even if the hypnotist implanted a very complex set of desires and beliefs, we still would not attribute consciousness to the hypnotic agent unless we were arguing in the factually very already dismissed. The trouble is that when we heard the voice expressing the desires and beliefs, we would regard the waking subject as at least the joint issuer of the communications. Before attributing consciousness to the hypnotic agent, we would insist on communications that could not be jointly issued by the waking subject. But that means that we would require that hypnotic agent to pass the communication test under his own flag.

If this is the pattern of our discrimination, it is an understandable one. We know that the hypnotic agent is under orders and so any communications that do not present this inside picture of his predicament do not have to be attributed to him. If some communications did have to be attributed to him, others which need not be, might be, but if none have to be, none will be, even if the states that they express are integrated in a complex way. That seems to be the theory underlying the identification of the speaker behind the voice and we do not have to

One model for the rift would be the dissociation of two personalities within a single person. Haight examines a variety of cases of this kind in the hope that they will help us to understand the rift that occurs in ordinary cases of self-deception (the best example we can manage). Perhaps the most helpful is the case history of "Bv". Eve Black was aware of Eve White's thoughts, but not vice versa, and Eve Black could not apply Eve White with thoughts which arrived in the form of hallucinatory voices, and even more surprisingly, she was able to withdraw or distort Eve White's thoughts. So we have the possibility of the deception of one multiple personality by another and there are clear points of analogy with self-deception. The deceiving and the deceived personalities both belong to the same person and the deceiving personality has knowledge of the thought processes of the deceived personality, and so can devise a complex strategy involving several moves towards her final goal.

A different model is provided by hypnosis. A hypnotized subject can be given elaborate instructions, which he carries out at the end of the trance rationalizing as he goes. Here too there is an analogy with ordinary self-deception. If we are asked who it is who carries out the instructions, a plausible answer is that it is the hypnotic agent. We will using the subject's eyes to pick up the cues for his performance and possibly even applying direct access to the subject's consciousness.

The difference between these two models is that the hypnotist attributes consciousness to the dissociated personality but not to the hypnotic agent. The hypnotic agent is not the subject's eyes to pick up the cues for his performance and possibly even applying direct access to the subject's consciousness. The difference between these two models is that the hypnotist attributes consciousness to the dissociated personality but not to the hypnotic agent. The hypnotic agent is not the subject's eyes to pick up the cues for his performance and possibly even applying direct access to the subject's consciousness.

In fact, this was neither Mr. Locke's solution nor indeed the whole of his problem. Tully and Paley in these remarks did little more than contribute to a tradition that was already well established within a hundred years of the first publication of the *Two Treatises of Government* and has since remained peculiarly vigorous in Western political theory. Mr. Locke's solution, as explained here, is an individual could justly acquire private property in land, a problem of "some difficulty" by the law of nature. Land was "no doubt" originally the common property of all mankind.

Professor Tully's chief ambition "is to recover the meaning which John Locke intended to convey in his theory of property", and naturally the fifth chapter of the *Second Treatise* supplies the central text for discussion. But the task of textual analysis is preceded by two complementary inquiries, designed to illuminate the character and immediate teleological

attribute consciousness to a splinter that has not been identified as a speaker. We could develop the theory even further by insisting that there is no need to attribute consciousness to the splinter unless it manifests consciousness of itself as an integrated system distinct from the rest of the subject. That certainly seems to be the right point to consider integration.

The theory may seem to be consciousness too tightly to sole command of the voice, even if only to intermittent command. However, it merely supplies a rule for positive identification of the speaker and definite attribution of consciousness to him. If the splinter fails the communication test, that may be because it is in sole command of the voice but maintaining an obstinate silence, or it may be because there are communications but it is only their joint-issuer. In both these cases it may still be conscious but we do not have to suppose that it is.

But could it be conscious without any command of the voice, and so without even the possibility of speaking? If so, it is not easy to see how such an attribution of consciousness could be understood. Freud's general reason for not making it was that in such cases the splinter would not be accessible to the consciousness of the rest of the subject. Haight observes that this leaves it open that the splinter might still be conscious of itself. But Freud had a special reason for rejecting that possibility too. As Thomas Nagel has pointed out, Freud believed that there are so many internal inconsistencies in the Unconscious that we would have to postulate a large number of different subjects in order to give them the kind of integration that is needed for consciousness of oneself as a distinct system.

It is an important feature of the actual phenomenon of self-deception that it usually involves a small, well integrated splinter. A wish promotes a belief without any basis or even in opposition to a rival belief that does have some basis. If the wish itself is not repressed in the Preconscious, at least its operation must be. That will be the splinter, which may then simply produce the belief or may do so by exploiting the subject's situation and conscious states in the cunning way that is typical of extended self-deception.

Evidently Freud could not invoke biopsychical reason for denying that such a splinter

could be conscious of itself. It would be too well integrated. However, his general reason remains powerful. There is no external consciousness of the splinter and all its achievements can be explained functionally without postulating an internal self-consciousness. Some will protest that this is not decisive and that they can still picture the self-consciousness of the splinter completely cut off from any access to the speech-centre - something like being buried alive. But we can dismiss this picture, with Freud, without extending functionalism to cover the whole of our conscious mental lives and so without ignoring the rich phenomenal show that we actually enjoy.

Self-deception is a sin against reason and the difficulty of understanding how a rational animal can commit it is far more important than the impossibility of satisfying the literal requirements of the concept. So when Haight has endorsed that impossibility and put it aside, and criticized Sartre for not putting it aside, we might expect a longer treatment of the paradoxes of irrationality and some kind of theory about them. What we get is an interesting discussion, an account of a self-deceptive episode in her own life, but very little theory.

This is because the paradox of literal self-deception dominates the first part of the book, pushing the more important paradoxes of irrationality into the background. Of course, these paradoxes do not have to be introduced as if they were intellectually paralyzing. We may be quite ready to admit that people do act against their own better judgment and do form beliefs against their own assessment of the tendency of the evidence. But we still want to know how these things happen. The problem that starts an inquiry does not have to threaten paralysis.

If we include the paradoxes of irrationality in our survey, we can discern an overall pattern. The easiest achievement of unreason is the promotion of a belief that is neither favoured nor disfavoured by the subject's evidence. Next in order of difficulty comes the promotion of a belief whose negation is a natural consequence of his evidence; then comes the case in which the negation is a logical consequence of his evidence, and finally what is accepted may simply be the negation of itself. That would be literal self-deception and it is

The measure of man

By David Kirby

A.R. AMMONS:
Selected Longer Poems
104pp. W.W. Norton. \$12.95.
0 393 01297 2

Ammons is hard to read, not because he is hard to understand, but because his vatic poems make the reader want to get everything from them. Ammons's usual persona is a prophet in the sense that E. M. Forster meant the word — not that he predicts outbreaks of war or encounters with handsome strangers but that he speaks as though inspired. A glance at some of the shorter poems (naming the texts in *Selected Poems 1951-1977* and *Diversifications*) bears this out. In an early one, "Bees Stopped", the persona derives complete satisfaction from his understanding of nature's quiet but ceaseless activity. He sees nothing moving in the distance, but then he bends to the ground "and life was everywhere/I went on sometimes whispering". In another early poem, "The Wide Land", nature's noisier aspects are broached, but still the persona is happy. The wind blinds him and then epologues, yet the dogmatic persona is unforgotten. "No I said you don't have to explain it's just the way things are/Blessed in the wide land/turned and asked my feet to loose stones and sudden/alternations of height." Here the persona seems to be saying that though he may be blind and stumbling, he is as happy as a clam. Bee song or blizzard: anything nature throws his way is fine with him.

Last this persona seems smug and overweening, a third poem from roughly the same period should be cited as evidence that he is taking his vatic duties seriously. In "Choice" the persona comes to a star that goes in both directions. He spins "the airless heights" and sinks into what seems to be "the inundating dark", but there is a surprise in store: "millenniums later waking in a lightened air/I shivered in high purity and still descending groped with the god that rolls up circles of our linear/night in crimping disciplines/tighter than any climb". Though he tries to descend, the persona ends in a place much like the airless heights he wanted to avoid. The idiot happiness of the two earlier poems is absent here; the persona takes seriously his struggle with a deceitful god and reveals that he is aware of the serious and possibly dangerous implications of "those stones" and "sudden alterations of height".

The persona's awareness of his awareness grows as Ammons's career develops. In "Dunes" and "Center" he says "firm ground is not available" and "nothing gets caught at all". In a more recent poem, entitled "Mountain Talk", quoted here in its entirety, combines the persona's joy in nature (which characterizes "Bees Stopped" and "The Wide Land") with his understanding of his inability to apprehend nature (as seen in "Dunes" and "Center"): "I was going along a dusty highway/when the mountain/rose the way/turned me to its silence/Oh, I said, how come/I don't know your/oblique symmetry and rest/northeless, said the mountain, would you wouldn't be/holded here within changeless prospect/holded in an unalterable view: so I went out/seeking my/numberless fingers".

It is clear that Ammons is bearing out William James's belief that you ought not to distinguish where you cannot divide, yet sometimes you must. Temperatures have to be taken out to be made. The trick is to cut cleanly, not there are few surgeons (then, then, Ammons). His short lines, his overall brevity, his avoidance of punctuation marks other than the occasional comma that he uses quickly and to good effect are the hallmarks of his minimalist style. His quietness and understatement, "For Harold Bloom", the last poem in *Selected Poems 1951-1977* and one of the longest poems in the book (though it is only a page), expresses the persona's struggle with the central paradox of Ammons's poetry: namely, that it is necessary to distinguish though never adequately. The poem that expresses best the poet's (especially the prophet-poet's) need to contain is "Measure", which says that the objects of nature "promote the measure" and that there is "aether measure/holded". The trick is to measure in the most judicious and subtle way.

For some reason the critics who have complained that Ammons's own measure has been proven to be a poor one as they yardstick his thought and art have been compared to that of Henry Vaughan, St. Thomas, Browne, D. An. Thompson, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Pound, Eliot, Wallace Ste-

vens, William Carlos Williams, Raethke, Dylan Thomas, and Robert Creeley. A list of such length of poets of such brilliance almost precludes additional comparisons, but perhaps its self-evident appropriateness will permit the suggestion of one more name: that of Stephen Crane. His other roots notwithstanding, Ammons characteristically writes like Crane at his best (though Crane was not at his best very often, at least as a poet). He recalls that Crane who wrote "I love love/There is no world/Nor word" and "I was in the darkness/I could not see my words/Nor the wishes of my heart/Then suddenly there was a great light-/Let me into the darkness again". What makes Ammons's poetry technically closer to Crane's than anyone else's are not only its minimalist characteristics but also the recurrent and perhaps conscious sophomoricisms on which both writers rely. Both of them have personas who wrestle with gods and talk to the wind. Both use words like "foreverness" (Ammons) and "impenetrableness" (Crane). Both have in common the stock poetic situation: the attractions, the poems so brief that they seem more the jottings of the apprentice who wants to be known as poet than the attempts of the maturing artist who wants to perfect his craft. The odd thing is that both writers off. All great ideas are simple, as Tolstoy said, but he might have added that it takes a great artist to present great ideas simply. Ammons is such an artist, which is why he is one of a handful of American lyric poets meant to be read again and again.

His achievement as a writer of long poems is another matter, however. Not that any writer of long poems has it easy. Even the best of us have a built-in resistance to length in literature, and some have expressed that resistance in mischievous aphorisms, from Dr. Johnson's "None ever wished it longer" to Sydney Smith's "Short views, for God's sake, short views" and Jules Renard's "One can say of most literature that it is too long". But literature abounds with splendid long poems in America alone: there is Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, William's *Poems*, Stevens's *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Pound's *Cantos*, W. D. Snodgrass's *Heart Needle*, Ginsberg's *Howl*, and Allen Ginsberg's marvellous but little-known *In/Direction*. With one exception, though, none of these poets uses the sophomoric language that Ammons employs so successfully in his short poems. (The exception is Whitman, who makes up for the sophomoric language in his long poetry with sheer energy and who, paradoxically, falls when he uses the same language in his short poems, which are often flaccid and tired.) And that is the problem. Ammons is a prophet, a vatic poet. Yet occasional utterances are sibilant, not windy when they become windy, lose latest and turn away. In Ammons's short poems, sophomoric language resonates long after we finish reading; in the long poems, the resonance comes only upon another, and the effect, if there is any effect at all, is discordant and finally numbing. Someone with some *Stiffness* may find Ammons's *Essay on Poetics*, one of the poems in this collection, a masterpiece, but I found it "a project" (as Ammons calls it in the last line) that helped the poet while away a snowstorm.

And yet one of these five longer poems is a work of sustained artistry that reads with any on the list above. In *Summer Session*, Ammons's persona is a teacher whose gentle ramblings range from very advice to his students ("discover for yourselves where the problems are & amass alternative strategies/observe the D's & no pass") to voluptuous reminiscences of picnic afternoons.

We just had lunch at the picnic table under the elm canopy of canopies, peach slices, blueberries, all good colorings in a glass cup of hotdogs & pop: brilliant replenishment; by destruction with the berry burnt; the teeth in a freer of Manhattan juice; the robin's nest you out on a peak; the overhang of the table; the work of course, a chip or two; distant approaching; above, the yellow triangles of mounds.

What tells this longer poem apart from the others is its use of sophomoric language comically, as in the last excerpt, and its avoidance of it elsewhere, as in the second.

Also, that tells the *Essay on Poetics* and three other poems like it, which are "projects" for the snowbound poet. Prophecy is essentially a Mediterranean art; perhaps poets who don't live in sunny climes should realize that there is nothing wrong with winter moods and cold socks.

After the Fall

By Jay Parini

LOUISE GLOCK:
Descending Figure
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Louise Glück's persona occupy the same totemic ground as the woman in Frost's "The Will Wife", who has "no saying dark enough/For the dark pino that kept/Forever trying the window latch". She examines with peculiar detachment the anxieties, frustrations and, sometimes, the hallucinations that pertain to family life. As early as *Firstborn* (1968), Glück's women were portrayed as passive victims of marriage. One voice, in "Bridal Piece" laments:

Our honeymoon
He planted us by
Water. It was March. The moon
Lurched like a searchlight, like
His murmurs across my brain—
He had to have his way.

Since then Glück has matured enormously, now referring, in "Epithalamium", to "the terrible charity of marriage". In "Autumn", a poised and haunting poem, she says,

The word
is bear: you give and give, you empty
yourself
into a child. And you survive
the automatic loss. Against inhuman
landscape,
the tree becomes a figure of grief; its form
is forced accommodation. At the grave,
it is the woman, isn't it, who bends,
the spear useless beside her.

Between *Firstborn* and her new book, *Descending Figure*, Glück published no other volumes. *The House on Marshland* (1975), a book full of blazing little legends recalling Blake's realm of Geese, in which fertility degenerates into the rote grind of witless reproduction. Glück pictures that world as a place where "schools of apes circle thebald shades, drift through gauze fluttering of vegetation". In characteristic fashion the mood of the opening poem of that book hovers between harvest and pestilence. Working in a symbolist mode, Glück cannot be pinned to a specific interpretation; childhood appears to be the poem's subject, but other possible meanings radiate from it.

Among the most affecting poems in the new book is "The Gift", cast in the form of a prayer for her son, who is "too little, so ignorant", and just beginning to talk. He stands at the sacred door, crying "oggle, oggle", and sometimes a dog will stop and come up / the wall. This happy accident confirms the child's simple faith in language; his mother prays that he believe it was no accident at all but evidence of a magical link between language and vision. Glück, in poem after poem, explores the possibility of this link, although she knows that it may not exist. In "Illuminations", again about her son's early attempts at speech, she celebrates the simply mystery of word and object:

Last winter he could barely speak.
I moved his crib to face the window:
in the dark mornings
he would stand and grip the bars
until the walls appeared,
calling light, light,
that see syllable, in
demand of recognition.

Davenport's Introduction is very poetic, a brilliant historical romance, and the way it is poetic illustrates the source of his inspiration: Imagism (Hilda Doolittle figures in both the Introduction and the notes), and the kind of fragmentation of reality or perception best illustrated in the short story, especially the stories of Sudora Welby, to whom this book is dedicated. Imagism stimulated some lovely writing; but as a movement it poetry it ended before 1920, partly because a love of fragmentation can only go so far. In the short story it had a richer,

A few of Glück's poems seem frankly autobiographical, but in general her work is peopled with ghostly figures caught in paradigmatic struggles, such as husband against wife or child against mother. Hunger is a prime motivating force in her world, and the fear of death casts a shadow over the small joys that occur almost gratuitously. In "The Fear of Burial", she forces us to adjust our angle of vision in conformity with her own, which is original and strange:

In the empty field, in the morning,
the body waits to be claimed.
The spirit sits beside it, on a small
rock—
nothing comes to give it form again.

Think of the body's loneliness.
At night pacing the sheared field,
its shadow bled lightly around.
Such a long journey.

And already the remota, trembling
lights of the village
not pausing for it as they scan the rows.
How far away they seem,
the wooden doors, the bread and milk
laid like weights on the table.

longer life. Each short story in *Sudora Welby* collection, for instance, is a scene from a lost floor, in a world of little men. Reality is rare, small, bitty: a hummingbird. And Davenport's debt to Greece is another such hummingbird. It presents a dangerously seductive, glamorized vision of a world which is bronze, terra cotta, painted mud, dyed wool, and banquets.

Davenport's underlying aim is to translate the world as it is into a world that is better. He is "without any apology except the dubious one of sentimentality" (p. 10); that his "startling-point of view" (p. 10) is "the world as it is" (p. 10) is a translation of the world as it is. He offers four translations of the "Parthenon" in sequence, which suggest a slightly confusing notion of the kind of job a translation ought to do. He has done a "multiple" one: "first, to grasp the text... as literally as possible;... second, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... third, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... fourth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... fifth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... sixth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... seventh, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... eighth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... ninth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... tenth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... eleventh, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... twelfth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... thirteenth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... fourteenth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... fifteenth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... sixteenth, to reconstitute the text as it might have been;... seventeenth, 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The demand for democracy

By Abraham Brumberg

JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN:
Soviet Dissidents - Their Struggle for
Human Rights
304pp. Boston: Beacon Press. \$13.95.

Dissent in the Soviet Union has fallen on bad days. Sundry forms of petty harassment, arrests, imprisonments, emigration (forced or voluntary), and those deadly enemies of idealism - fatigue and disillusionment - have taken their toll. According to a recent issue of *Index on Censorship* (London, No. 4, 1980), twenty-four samizdat publications have been appearing in the Soviet Union, more or less regularly, over the past four years. The figures are astonishing, especially if we bear in mind the unspeakable conditions under which these journals are produced; yet it tells us little either about their contents or about their circulation and impact on the Soviet population. To judge by the most compendious periodic collection of samizdat materials published in the West, *The Samizdat Archives* (Munich), virtually all of the unofficial Soviet documents in recent years have been protests, petitions, or accounts of police and judicial repressions; very few of them are, unhappily, of any intrinsic intellectual interest. In addition, the signatories tend to be the same, with only a few new names appearing now and then.

Now to some these melancholy comments may seem sacrilegious. Yet surely it is no reflection on the courage of the several thousand people involved to suggest that there are no match for a powerful state bent on their annihilation. Nor is it to imply that the "human rights movement" (or "democratic movement", as it is sometimes called) has been a failure. As Joshua Rubenstein demonstrates in his sympathetic account of the vicissitudes of this movement - on account based on copious documentary evidence as well as on extensive interviews with many of its participants now in the West - dissent has become an integral part of the Soviet political landscape. Only a "complete reform of the system", he says, "which no one expects, or a return to outright Stalinist methods, which many fear, could bring it to an end." However meagre its following, the movement has proved successful, by refusing to show obedience, loyalty or fear, that a despotic government with totalitarian appetites can be challenged in areas crucial to its quest for legitimacy. By its very existence, it has set an example for many aggrieved groups in Soviet society (with whose struggle - except those of Soviet Jews - the book does not deal): religious believers, national minorities, even workers.

Emigration from the Soviet Union, once an altogether unthinkable option, has now become a distinct, if severely discriminated, reality. Penalties for nonconformity are no longer as savage as in the past - thanks in large measure to those brave men and women who have openly insisted that the government observe its own laws, and who have helped to make the most flagrant violations of legality a matter of international concern. Soviet writers and intel-

lectuals, either those within, on the fringes of, altogether unrelated to the "democratic movement", have been largely freed from the necessity of writing "for the drawer". To be sure, publication abroad followed - as has increasingly been the case - by living abroad, is a bitter experience for any creative artist, yet it is preferable to enforced silence at best, imprisonment or disappearance at worst.

The fact that so many Soviet artists and writers have been able to emigrate to and work in Western Europe and the United States has restored the continuity of Russian art and literature, so cruelly suppressed by Stalin. In addition, as Mr Rubenstein notes, the presence of thousands of former Soviet citizens outside their native country has provided the world with a vast reservoir of information about the Soviet Union, and has helped to dispel many of the illusions about the "fatherland of socialism" that abound in the West. Finally, dissent has become a factor in international politics, especially in East-West relations. President Carter's human rights policy, for all its ineptitude, inconsistencies, and ploys, has compelled Moscow at least to justify opinion, and to curb some of its more brutal instincts as well.

It may reasonably be argued that the relative relaxation of Soviet policies and the (also relative) liberalization of the Soviet system were brought about by objective imperatives, rather than by the emergence of organized dissent, and that the latter is simply one of the results of processes set in motion after Stalin's death. Yet it is true, too, that these processes, having facilitated the growth of dissent, have in turn been affected by it. Above all, Soviet dissidents, of whatever ideological persuasion, and however small their number, have given standards of moral courage and decency to society which in the past had known little but abject fear, servility, venality, and double-think.

What about the future? Rubenstein is understandably reluctant to peer into the crystal ball, yet some reflections, however sombre, may be in order. Given the bloody-minded attitude of the current Soviet leadership, there is little prospect of any relaxation in the war against those whom they chose to regard as their sworn enemies - and that goes as much for Solidarity in Poland as for the dissidents in the Soviet Union. For the time being, then, dissent, for all its admirable achievements, is probably destined to remain a marginal phenomenon of Soviet life. Its fortunes may conceivably improve. Yet - paradoxically and cruelly - a real opportunity for the "human rights activists" to sink roots in society at large may also invite the most disastrous consequences. The key to the future of Soviet dissent lies in the future of the Soviet Union, and in the policies of its leaders. The rumblings of anger, frustration and discontent in the country are no longer below the surface; they are caused, *en bono*, by burgeoning economic and social problems of a political system unable to meet the needs of a modern industrial state and the rising expectations of its citizens. Military expansion abroad, whatever its temporary benefits to a regime of power, is no solution - certainly

not in the long run. Nor is the continued reliance on coercion at home, on half-hearted or ad hoc economic palliatives, or on costly commercial deals with Western Germany and the United States (which, one hopes, will come to a decisive halt if Brezhnev follows in Hitler's footsteps and sends his tanks rolling into Poland). Viewed objectively, none of these measures is likely to help the Soviet Union extricate itself from the critical situation in which it is bound to find itself in the near future.

There are Western "Sovietologists" (such as Jerry Hough) who expect the Soviet regime to "accommodate itself" to the compelling forces for change, "rather than to resist them" (*How the Soviet Union is Governed*, 1980). While it is true that either Brezhnev or his successors will eventually embark upon a number of basic economic (and hence political) reforms. In that case, of course, the "democratic movement" whose fundamental programme is that of evolution rather than of a radical transformation of the Soviet system, could play a more important role in Soviet politics.

I am afraid, however, that this optimistic "scenario" is but a devout wish not likely to be consummated. If history is any guide at all, the Soviet leaders may be expected to hold on for dear life and to continue their present policies, thus causing an ever greater stagnation of the system, a further deterioration of the standard of living - and possibly (however apocalyptic this vision may seem to us now) a dire eruption of mass discontent. Should this come to pass, dissent may well change from an expression of moral protest into a mass-movement of outright political opposition. And then what? It does not take much imagination to foresee the response of a regime still addicted to the notion of the ultimate form of dialogue with its subjects. All told, then, the outlook is far from encouraging.

Tipping the scales

By Julius Lewin

JOHN D. JACKSON:
Justice in South Africa
239pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
(Penguin paperback, £1.95)
0 436 22030 X

If and when a revolution occurs in South Africa, it is likely to start in Port Elizabeth. The country's fifth largest city, it has a population of nearly half a million, two-thirds of whom are black. It is the centre of the motor car and other industries. Most important of all, the Africans are culturally homogeneous, all speaking Xhosa; and there are many whose fathers were comparatively well educated in the old-established secondary schools and at Fort Hare College in the Eastern Province.

The author of this modest book grew up in Port Elizabeth and practised there as a solicitor specializing in the defence of black clients in criminal cases. As his own home was not among the few liberal ones in the city, he began without preconceptions in favour of Africans. Gradually as his experience of the courts grew, he came to realize how harshly the administration of "justice" was imposed on Africans. The formal and technical equality usually (but not always) required by law was breached every day by African prosecutors and magistrates who resented John Jackson's efforts to get a fair trial for his clients. His professional organization, the Law Society, instead of protecting him, also barred him with needless surveillance and without justification. After years of courageous work, the author, fore-

warned that he was himself to be "slandered", left the country.

Jackson's book is the more telling in its indictment of white justice because the author does not strive for effect. He is sincere and slightly old-fashioned in his belief in the possibilities of impartial justice regardless of race. He would have been fired by reading *Albion's Seed* with the same title, published in 1973. Such a realization that the health of the legal system cannot be very different from the rest of society which it serves. Mr Jackson is the latest in a line of lawyers appalled by the miscarriages of justice they witnessed. These lawyers are almost always in retaining their belief in the rule of law as expounded by Albert Dicey in his classic book nearly a century ago. However, "most solicitors", as Mr Jackson says, "are completely unaware of what is happening in South African courts. Nor do most of them want to know. They believe in the nobility of the law and harbour that illusion of justice depicted by the blindfolded figure with a sword in one hand and the scales of justice in the other. Unfortunately, in South Africa the blindfold has been removed, the scales are unbalanced, and the sword is a constant use."

In the police state which South Africa has been, not since yesterday but for at least the past twenty years, the law hardly professes to be impartial between the state and its citizens - not that blacks are citizens. In 1965 the Secretary for Justice, the permanent head of the department, declared that legal aid for the poor was "inherently harmful" because it would "undermine the administration of justice and would, moreover, be completely inconsistent with the general judicial and social pattern in the country". Yes, indeed

The difficulties of desegregation

By Sandra Salmons

WILLIAM H. CHAFFE:
Civilites and Civil Rights
Greensboro, North Carolina, and the
Black Struggle for Freedom
436pp. Oxford University Press. £13.95.
0 19 502625 X

When the US Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954 that segregation in schools must end, Greensboro, North Carolina, was the first city in the South to announce that it would comply with the decision. Seventeen years later, in 1971, Greensboro actually integrated its schools, becoming one of the last cities in the South to comply with Federal desegregation orders. In *Civilites and Civil Rights*, William H. Chaffe, a professor of history at Duke University, behaviour of one of the leading citizens of what was reputedly the South's most progressive state - and concludes that it was this very progressiveness that inhibited any real progress in civil rights for blacks.

Chaffe's research focuses on the period from 1945 to 1955 - during which Greensboro and the rest of the country witnessed the evolution of the so-called "moderate" civil rights movement. But for modern already familiar with the city, his examination of Greensboro's historical background may prove more provocative. Between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the 1900s, the blacks and whites of Greensboro often held comparable jobs, received similar wages, and lived in neighbouring houses. But around the turn of the century, according to Chaffe, the threat of an anti-employment revolt by poor whites and blacks led Greensboro's white elite to make "respectable" blacks and institutions white supremacy. The whites of Greensboro, he argues, were the "driving force" of the "progressive" movement within a few years blacks were excluded from factory and clerical jobs, and discriminated in only for domestic service, while white factory workers, suddenly elevated to a higher caste and intent upon their new-found racial superiority, became less sympathetic for integration.

The conventional wisdom is that middle-class whites, sympathetic at heart to the black struggle for equal rights, hesitated only to please the racist poor whites. But in Chaffe's analysis, the primary resistance to civil rights in Greensboro came from the white leadership, including the Burlington mill-owning family. Unlike the rednecks who presided over less "progressive" Southern towns, Greensboro's ruling class evinced a benevolent paternalism toward the 35,000 blacks who represented one-fourth of the population; the problem was that the blacks were accordingly expected to respond with childlike obedience. When white philanthropists financed an indoor swimming pool for the black community, for example, it was with the implicit understanding that the blacks would stay out of the "white" pool. Through such gentlemanly agreements, rather than the more obvious methods of the Ku Klux Klan, Chaffe observes, Greensboro's blacks were kept in line.

The response to *Brown* by Greensboro and the state of North Carolina fits this pattern. While leaders elsewhere flamboyantly blocked schoolhouse doors, North Carolina's advisory committees on education - which included three blacks, all state employees - devised a local-option scheme that effectively allowed each community to continue to draw the colour line. Proponents of the so-called *Peersall Plan* argued - without justification, in Chaffe's view - that unless it was adopted, North Carolina's redneck would rise in rebellion. As a sop to Washington, a few communities permitted token desegregation; these included Greensboro which, following the unenviable enrolment of a handful of blacks in an all-white school, was hailed by the press as a symbol of the "New South, with a new liberalism". The old South knew better. While an anxious school official from Little Rock, Arkansas, home of some of the ugliest out-of-control segregation riots, "You, North Carolinians, have devised one of the cleverest techniques of perpetuating segregation that we have seen."

Stalled in the schools, the increasingly angry black citizens of Greensboro turned their fire on other targets. In early 1960 four young men from Greensboro's black college entered the local Woolworth's sit-down at the whites-only lunch counter and demanded to be served. It was the nation's first sit-in, the "coffee party" equivalent of the Boston Tea Party as a harbinger of revolution, and within weeks the technique spread to dozens of cities across the South. The sit-in spread across Greensboro, too, violating the town's unwritten code of conduct laid down by paternalistic whites and undermining the town's cherished image of itself as a liberal place. The sit-ins, which soon led to more arrests and then to noisy protest marches, deeply offended the sensibilities of Greensboro's self-styled progressives. In an editorial that revealed much about white priorities, one Greensboro newspaper commented that the "fear of facing America" no longer concerns the rights of school attendance as it does the public facilities. It concerns the rights of business to invite their own customers and the fairness of business practices.

As black frustration turned to rage, while Greensboro's civilites came under siege, in 1963 Greensboro became the home of the South's second largest racial demonstration against segregation. By 1969 it had emerged as a centre of the black power movement in the Southeast, and black students at the National Guardsmen in a series of armed confrontations that finally resulted in the fatal shooting of a black youth. By the violent standards of American race riots, that was a small toll - but it shocked Greensboro's white elite out of any lingering complacency. Slowly blacks began to make real gains including several important political appointments. But it was not until 1971, when Greensboro fully desegregated its schools,

The assertion of monarchy

By Malcolm Vale

JOSEPH R. STRAYER:
The Reign of Philip the Fair
450pp. Princeton University Press.
\$19.50 (paperback, £7.50).
0 691 03502 2

"The handsomest of birds which is worth absolutely nothing... such is our king of France, who is the handsomest man in the world and who can do nothing except to stare at men." Thus Bernard Saisset, bishop of Pamiers, compared Philip IV of France (1285-1314) with the owl, mocking the king's impassive stare and his habit of letting his agents and officers speak for him on public occasions. Joseph R. Strayer now gives us a long-awaited study from which Philip the Fair emerges as a high priest of the religion of monarchy who made his own decisions and let others such as Guillaume de Nogaret, Pierre Flote and Enguerrand de Marigny, justify them and carry them out. This is a somewhat different interpretation of the reign than that presented by Philip's most recent French biographer, Jean Favier, who sees the king more often swayed by the influence of a dominant minister than does Professor Strayer. Saisset was clearly wrong when he saw the king merely on a good-looking object; Pope Clement V perhaps more accurately is seeing the king as a steady descender from prosperity into poverty, driven very largely by the king's war in Aquitaine and Flanders (1294-1303) and from which the kingdom of France never recovered. Strayer to one extent reinforces this contemporary assessment, but there is much in his book that is new.

In the police state which South Africa has been, not since yesterday but for at least the past twenty years, the law hardly professes to be impartial between the state and its citizens - not that blacks are citizens. In 1965 the Secretary for Justice, the permanent head of the department, declared that legal aid for the poor was "inherently harmful" because it would "undermine the administration of justice and would, moreover, be completely inconsistent with the general judicial and social pattern in the country". Yes, indeed

The author builds upon his own earlier works, ranging from *Studies in Early French Taxation* (with Charles Taylor) of 1939 to *Les gens de justice de Languedoc sous Philippe le Bel* of 1970, to produce an exhaustively detailed picture of how the king's officers were recruited, rewarded and controlled. The reign was innovative in many respects: the Chambre des Comptes (the French equivalent of the English Exchequer) is shown to have existed by 1303 or a little earlier; the appellate jurisdiction of the French crown was firmly established although "appeals" were relatively new in French jurisprudence; and the Paris Parlement emerged as the guardian of royal judicial supremacy over the great seigniors. Much recent historical writing has emphasized the extent to which French monarchial power of this period was a creation of the king's officers, and it is salutary to be reminded by Strayer that in the Parlement these men "knew the limits of royal power", and that it was not their decisions which led to the damaging and costly wars in Aquitaine and Flanders.

It is consequently to the king himself, and to the actions of his local, rather than central agents, that Strayer looks to explain the crises of Philip's reign. In his analysis, the great quarrel with Pope Boniface VIII resulted from the king's decision to tax the clergy for the Gascon war in 1296, and Philip's love-hate refusal to descend to a petty war of words with the pope seems to have led to the king's decision to use the pope's excommunication as a steady descender from prosperity into poverty, driven very largely by the king's war in Aquitaine and Flanders (1294-1303) and from which the kingdom of France never recovered. Strayer to one extent reinforces this contemporary assessment, but there is much in his book that is new.

With hindsight castigate the self-deluded German-Jewish community which fondly imagined that there was ever had been "southern" Germany. He is right to dismiss this illusion. There were always two Germanies and an alternative to radical nationalism offered itself almost to the very end. Jewish activists knew perfectly well the two traditions in German life, knew friend from foe, and, to assess their chances. They responded vigorously to the non-liberal and anti-Semitic trends and neither ignored nor indulged their misgivings. Though far from quiescent, in the face of Nazism, they had to rely on the progressive forces could not have altered Jewish life to any significant way. The Jewish option for liberalism was not, Nivsky says, determined by self-deception (bourgeois class interests were not entirely absent either), or by a lack of choices (here one may quibble) but their was a genuine and deep commitment. Hitler must have realized, Nivsky writes, "that the Jews could have no place in a totalitarian Germany of his racialism, and of everything he and his National Socialist movement represented." It is a generous statement, but the German Jews probably deserve it.

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The liberal alternative

By Arnold Paucker

DAVID L. NIVSKY:
The Jews in Weimar Germany
229pp. Manchester University Press. £12.50.
0 7190 0828 X

When the Weimar Constitution removed from the Jewish citizens of Germany those disabilities which had plagued them throughout the chequered history of their nationhood, this overdue gesture was no guarantee for long-term security. David Nivsky tells us that the Jews in Weimar Germany, despite their struggles and defeat, leaving heavily in debt, on some of his specialist premises, but adding a good measure of hope to the first full-scale history of Weimar Jewry. The sections on the Jews and anti-Semitism or the role of the Jews in Weimar culture, politics and economic life are familiar subjects, matter, perhaps, though the point is well made that the Jews held no position of real power (army, heavy industry) in Weimar Germany.

In the days of Weimar the German Jews not only kept their tested allegiance to liberal values, they had become staunch Republicans, and a tendency to Socialism showed itself ever more strongly. And Nivsky is on solid ground when he belabours these historians who

The empire-builder

By Norman Stone

ROBERT M. MASSIE:
Peter the Great
The Life and Work
of a Russian Emperor, 1679-1725.
0 330 01575 8

It is at least the third biography of Peter the Great to appear in recent years: his life has been the subject of many a book, and his reign, the subject of many a play. It is a pity that they were not edited out for the English edition. Of course Peter the Great is a wonderful subject for a skilled popular writer. Mr Massie has obviously done his homework, and he can quite often write a good paragraph. His interests are of course overwhelmingly traditional. He loves describing battles, battles, court-life in the anachronistic before, Peter's majesty. He is dense, precise, and the odd companions whom Peter collected, each of them in his way a miniature Peter. His great strength is his ability to place his go on for some time. It is useful to have his

new account of Peter. Again, he is so close to avoid any overt comparison of Russia with Russia. Such comparisons can be of course too easily misleading, even though there are similarities that may deserve deeper consideration. Within his limits, Massie has done a decent enough job of describing Peter's life. I am not sure if it needed doing at all; and the life of Peter prompts so many questions that the traditional biographical method that the traditional biographer, in a way, may be the wrong one altogether. In a way, the whole business of transforming history into the Russian Empire reflects the spirit of Calvinism. What Peter did was to employ great numbers of "Protestant" Dutch or German - to tame and exploit the native country, the inhabitants of which could later be used to fight further territories elsewhere. Peter did to conquer the Baltic, in order to conquer Russia. The whole business was a matter of getting Peter to rob Peter - not a particularly brilliant piece of extraordinary religion.

many things which the later Capetians had more will than strength to do, and Philip the Fair was no exception to this rule.

To a great extent the reign was a commentary upon the question which Strayer poses in his discussion of Aquitaine and Flanders: "how could Philip's corruption of his rights and duties as king be reconciled with the existence of a highly organized and semi-independent system of local government?" Thirteenth and early fourteenth-century France was in some ways a federation of greater and lesser lordships, where in many areas Philip's conception of his role was at war with political and institutional realities. The "religion of monarchy" could never be allowed to muse too many dissenters and heretics in the great fiefs such as Burgundy, Anjou, Flanders or Artois lest monarchical rule was undermined by rebellion. Strayer argues that compromise was often imperative, and that Philip made his peace with the higher clergy and secular nobility better than with the towns both of Flanders and his own immediate domain. His legacy here was not a happy one. Yet even the magnates rose in defence of their regional liberties which the monarchy had threatened (however ineffectively) at the very end of the reign. The author shows that the noble leagues of 1314-15, however, did not attempt to abolish the judicial and administrative system that the king and his officers had created. They acted as the

English barons had acted in 1215. It was the abuse of the system, especially in the administration of royal justice at a local level, to which they objected rather than its existence.

Strayer sums up forty years' work upon his subject in the conclusion: "There were no civil wars in Philip's reign, no notable acts of treason, no executions of famous men, no plunderings of towns and villages". The Grand Master of the Temple might not have agreed with him, but with hind-sight modern readers may assent. Philip the Fair was very fortunate because - unlike his Valois successors - he was never confronted with a plausible rival claimant to his throne. The conditions pre-requisite for the Hundred Years War did not really exist during his reign.

This is, on the whole, a handsome and well-produced book, but there are rather more printing and proof-reading errors than one would expect, especially in Latin quotations. The illustrations are helpful, if sometimes a little cloudy, and the reproduction of a sketch (Fig. 5) drawn by an English scribe in the margin of the document recording an Anglo-French truce of 1298 is perhaps the most telling representation of the king. Philip confronts Edward I with a defiant glare more reminiscent of a prize-fighter than an owl. Professor Strayer leaves us with a lively picture of an assertive, even pugnacious, ruler, whose reign formed a crucial phase in the development of the French kingdom as a political and fiscal unit.

Publishing power

By J. M. Roberts

MARINO BERENGO:
Intelletuali e liberali nel Milan della Restaurazione
426pp. Turin: Einaudi. L.18.000.

After the collapse of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy in 1814, Milan, its former capital, had thirty years even more remarkably free from disturbance than other parts of Italy. There were some bad times, economically speaking, but to general the period was (in Lombardy) one of growing prosperity and steady, if slow, innovation. One set of structural and technical changes has attracted the attention of Marino Berengo, a scholar already well-known for his work in Venetian history; he is interested in their gross economic impact than their connection with a major cultural development: the transformation of publishing and book-selling which made Milan the centre of the Italian book-trade and led many Italian intellectuals to see it as their cultural capital. Berengo claims: "rather more than in the present book, in which he explores and measures this phenomenon; he suggests that this transformation also helped to determine the shape of the Italian intellectual life of the Risorgimento and perhaps, even, somewhat to define the notion of the intellectual itself."

The documentation on which the story rests is much richer than might be expected by students who are used to working with the sometimes copious, but uneven and often informal records of English publishing-houses. In the case of Milan, the efforts of successive governments, Napoleonic and Austrian, to maintain effective regulation of the press (not merely for ideological and political reasons, but to protect the management of economic and socio-legal relationships) offers one line of fairly copious and comprehensive documentation of the book trade. The Austrian regime of the Restoration though cautiously cautious, was not harsh, and it is not censurable so much as the judicial and fiscal reform which provides the most valuable approximation of the surviving papers of individual firms and entrepreneurs. Many papers remain in the treasury and often the trail runs out frustratingly just at the point at which one would like to know more; but this is not the author's fault. Some of the businesses Berengo enters across years very small in scale and have left few records. In other instances, information is only available by chance, or when things go wrong.

Professor Berengo is to be congratulated for having taken soundings and discounts. The thread of development is not always easy to seize and follow in this concentrated body of data. Broadly, it proceeds chronologically, as well as thematically, registering the complex of transitions of older forms of publication by noting the growing difficulties they faced (above all, of raising capital), the new forms of subscription and sale evolved to spread risks and costs, and the important personalities along the way. This is often very illuminating: the precociousness of the Vallardi brothers' enterprises to a striking index of the passage from one world to another. The effect, nonetheless, is sometimes confusing. It is not easy to be convinced of the importance of the cultural theme suggested by Berengo's approach and (for the good reason that the statistical data are sporadic) it is very hard to quantify his conclusions about the structure and economics of publishing.

Nonetheless, this is truly a pioneer work, certainly indispensable to the further development of studies until now neglected in Italian history. Moreover, it is full of good things. The difficulties of publication experienced by Foscolo, who was saved only by friends in place, deserve to be shared by a wider circle than those specifically concerned with the poet. Menzoni, too, looks a little different to this reader of *I promessi sposi* after Professor Berengo's account of his disastrous attempt to publish a private and definitive edition of the novel. It was overshadowed on his initial success over discounts.

Diplomatic dance

By A. M. Rendel

H. J. BRIDGE and ROGER BULLOCK:
The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914
208pp. Longman. £8.95.
0 582 49134 7

The Concert of Europe has by now been played too often for anyone to expect some strikingly novel tune from a new interpretative study. Nevertheless, the two authors, both seasoned specialists in the diplomatic history of the hundred years from Waterloo to the First World War, have produced from their researches a careful and interesting explanation of the European states system.

Their book, however, compressed to the point of exhaustion is not for the general reader, who will be irritated by the assumption that he or she, like the mind the details of international conventions and treaties of long ago. There are parallels

between two situations after the Napoleonic wars and the present day; they are both periods in which two powers, Russia and Britain then, and Russia and the United States now, stand out as dominant and under suspicion from weaker states. But the authors make no concessions to readability by pointing up contemporary parallels. Instead they address themselves uncompromisingly to the advanced student (who will be helped in particular by the ample bibliography for each chapter).

found particularly convincing the account of the origins and effects of the Crimean War, and the contrast between Bismarck's astuteness and the valiant antics of his successors, who the growing power of the German Empire tested their self control. Outside Russia, Europe had little influence upon the system, the authors believe; but the growing threat to the monarchial establishment from liberal and social democratic forces inside Europe led them increasingly - and initially - to encourage nationalism.

John Co. 136

